

Rappahannock Astronomy Club

Minutes, February 16, 2022, Online Meeting

In attendance:

Jim Andrews & son Garrett
Jim Browder
Scott Busby
Bart Billard
Scott Campbell
Glenn Faini
Claire Gardiner
Glenn Holliday

Troy Major
Mark McDonagh
Mike Parker
Tim Plunkett
Matthew Scott
Steve Walk
Myron Wasiuta

The meeting began at about 8:05 p.m. with introductions. Twelve members and four visitors were present.

Old Business

- President's Report—Glenn Faini reported last year's membership total reached 65 members, and RAC had 36 members join or renew for 2022 thus far. He had only heard from a couple of people who said they had not planned to renew, so he hoped we could get back up to 60 again.
- Treasurer's Report—Matt Scott said incoming funds totaled \$377.50 for 17 new or renewing members, along with 5 renewing their Astronomical League (AL) membership. He said he sent a check to MSRO for \$180 based on the portion of the full member dues collected in 2021 allocated for support of MSRO. An additional \$3.75 went to AL from a member who wanted to join for a half year. (AL membership normally runs from July through June.)
- MSRO Report—Myron Wasiuta described MSRO for those not familiar with it, saying the observatory was available for RAC members' use via remote connection over the Internet without need to go to his house where the telescopes were located. He said there were four telescope stations with different capabilities and all were operational in spite of the early January snowstorm. He had to deal with some trees burdened by snow that were leaning over the dome of the StationONE telescope. The other telescopes are located in the middle of his yard and were merely covered with snow. (None of their enclosures had any leaks.) The StationTWO telescope had had a problem with its right ascension cable, and no replacement could be found. Finally, Matt asked Myron to let him try repairing the cable, and the day after Myron dropped it off, Matt had it ready for him to pick up again. There were no more problems with the tracking using the repaired cable. Myron said he was completing training of two people for operating telescopes at MSRO. He said one, Eric Goforth, would be ready to start operating the StationTHREE telescope without supervision in the near future. He said MSRO was available free to club members and invited them to consider trying to observe with MSRO, whether interested in astrophotography or something more scientific. For example, he said MSRO could be used for asteroid photometry, variable star work, tracking comets, or exoplanet work.
- Secretary's Report and *StarGazer* Report —Bart Billard said he had nothing to mention other than preparing and posting the previous meeting minutes. He said that this was the month the latest *StarGazer* issue was posted, and that Linda told him she did not have anything to report on the next issue yet.
- Vice President's Report—Glenn F. noted he had mixed up reports and asked Myron for the MSRO report when he should have asked for the Vice President's report. He suggested that it did not really matter, since there was no January star party so there was nothing to report. They discussed deciding whether to cancel or confirm star parties and agreed that Glenn would continue making the calls because living near Caledon allowed him to go there when a star party was on. Myron said he was happy to be a backup for running club meetings if Glenn was unable.
- Communications Committee and Cloud Storage Report—Glenn F. said John Maynard was not present to make a report but that he was working with Don Clark to transition the website maintenance tasks and had received admin permissions. He also said John was looking into

choices of cloud storage the club could purchase to make meeting recordings available for viewing later without the storage limits on the Zoom website.

- Equipment Inventory—Scott Busby did not have any news about the equipment, but gave a description of the kinds of equipment available for members to check out. One was the 8-inch SCT go-to telescope that the club recently purchased from him after he found it for sale and bought it with that in mind. He said he had ordered a polar alignment scope for its mount, and that it was already installed and waiting for some good weather so he could check its alignment. Eric Goforth had already asked to check it out when it was ready, so he will be first in line once Scott gets the polar scope alignment right. Scott also said he was shopping for suitable cases to put telescope packages together and make it more convenient for pickup and return of equipment. He also welcomed members to contact him and arrange a visit if they have a telescope and want to have some guidance on how to use it.

New Business

- Bylaws Vote—Glenn F. displayed the marked-up Bylaws showing the proposed changes. He noted they amounted to some slight changes in wording and a problem with the pagination that Linda fixed. One edit was to change “shall be” to “is” for the club’s name, and the other was to refer to light pollution effects on “the environment” instead of “our environment.” Glenn also noted that the dates at the end would be changed to reflect this year’s revision in January and the date the club votes to approve the changes. He explained the Executive Council (EC) had reviewed and approved the changes last month and that he had sent an email to members to let them know of the changes and the plan to vote on them this meeting. He asked whether any member wanted to offer comments or suggest other changes, and when there were none, he made a motion for the club to approve the Bylaws as revised in January, approved by the EC, and forwarded to the membership. Mike Parker and Scott Busby seconded the motion. No one offered discussion and we approved the motion on a voice vote. Glenn F. asked Bart to have Linda provide him the final PDF to distribute to the club. Not being sure who would handle posting the Bylaws on the club website, Bart agreed to check with Linda about that.
- Other Items—Glenn Holliday introduced himself as the Scouting coordinator and explained he occasionally gets requests from Scout troops who want to attend a star party and perhaps work on some badge requirements, which he was qualified to help with. He said he was in contact with a Girl Scout group that was going to attend the January star party, but that did not work out. Now they were asking about the March 5 star party. Glenn H. said he was bringing that up with the club because years ago that would be a Messier Marathon event, and because club participants would not have much time to answer visitor questions or give them views through telescopes, the club was reluctant to invite visitors. He wanted to ask whether that might still be the case before agreeing to accommodate the Girl Scout group’s request. Glenn F. said he thought the Messier Marathon no longer interested that many people because of the proliferation of go-to telescopes, but he would want some members to commit to attending that star party before promising it for the Girl Scouts. Glenn H. said he was close to Caledon and would attend to help with badge requirements. Glenn F. said he also lived close and could help out, so he thought the two of them would be sufficient to invite the Girl Scouts. He said he would also send out a request for more participants because we would have visitors.

Myron made some final remarks about use of MSRO. He shared his computer screen showing it connected to the StationTHREE telescope with a webcam view of the inside of the enclosure with the telescope parked. (The light was provided by the monitor of computer in the enclosure that controlled the telescope, and Myron sometimes had to move the remote computer’s mouse to keep the screen view lit.) He said this was the station MSRO was using for training, and it was equipped with an Explore Scientific 102-mm (4”) refractor and a one-shot color camera. At the end, Glenn F. also showed an aerial view he made of the station with him, Myron, and Jerry Hubbell standing alongside. He showed aerial views of two other stations, allowing Myron to say a few words about their equipment, along with the station Glenn did not have a view for.

Next Meeting

The next meeting is on Wednesday, March 16, 2022, at 8:00 p.m. It is planned as an online meeting.