

Rappahannock Astronomy Club

Minutes, March 16, 2022, Online Meeting

In attendance:

Scott Busby
Bart & Linda Billard
Don Clark
Glenn Faini
Claire Gardiner
Steve Heggemann

Glenn Holliday
Troy Major
Mark McDonagh
John Maynard
Matthew Scott
Steve Walk

The meeting began at about 8:05 p.m. Thirteen members attended.

Old Business

- **President's Report**—Glenn Faini said there would be no presentation, and he had not yet lined up any. He said unfortunately, James Lee Chen, with whom he talked about giving a presentation was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. Glenn F. hoped he might recover one day and asked us to keep him in our prayers. He said there were still 25 members who had not renewed, and he had sent out a reminder on March 10 that their membership was expiring and they needed to renew by the end of the month to avoid being dropped from the Groups.io list. Glenn F. reported the star party on March 5 was cancelled because of weather, but he found there was another window for doing a Messier Marathon from March 24 to April 1. He thought the April 2 star party was close enough that someone might be interested in trying one, but said he would not be able to attend because it was his anniversary. Some other club member would need to volunteer to cover the star party.
- **Treasurer's Report**—Matt Scott said we had seven new members or renewals last month, along with two Astronomical League (AL) renewals, resulting in \$162.50 incoming funds. There were no expenditures. He said there were also several more dues payments this month, including two the day of the meeting. Glenn F. discussed with Matt the PayPal account, which had reached a large enough balance to consider transferring some to the club bank account. He asked Matt's thoughts on how much to leave in the PayPal account for use in online payments. Matt said he was inclined to keep up to half the balance in each account to avoid having all our eggs in one basket. He said most expenditures were paid via the bank account except for things like the Zoom subscription, which is automatically paid out of the PayPal account. He said the AL payment in June was done with a check, and when Glenn F. asked, he said Jerry Hubbell was going to see what he could do about the AL website not being up to date because he also worked with them through Explore Scientific. Matt said so far it had not been resolved. He did not know what the problem was but mentioned they also took 6 months to include the 11 new club members who joined AL last year. Glenn F. thought he should send out a message to members saying that they could go to the AL website and download a pdf version of their magazine (*Reflector*).
- **StarGazer Report**—Linda Billard said she would not be starting on the next issue until April 1.
- **V.P. and MSRO Reports**—Glenn F. noted that both Jerry Hubbell and Myron Wasiuta were absent and that there was no star party for the vice president to report. He did ask Matt about the status of the telescopes and the repair of the right ascension cable for one of them. Matt said all four stations were operational. He replaced both back shells and fixed the grounding of the cable.
- **Communications Committee Report**—John Maynard said Don Clark had sent him lots of info, including a list of service providers and the logins for them. He was aware there had been a motion about purchasing a prepaid card for the cloud storage service but was still waiting on the result. Glenn F. asked Bart Billard, who did not have the information at hand, but did not recall a motion being approved. [A motion was tabled at the December 2021 meeting.] Glenn F. made a motion that the club approve the purchase of a \$100 prepaid credit card that John could use to pay for our cloud storage account. Matt asked whether John would purchase the card and get reimbursed by the club, and whether he could keep track of the charges made to it so Matt could keep track of our expenses. Steve offered a second to allow discussion. Mark McDonagh said he

recalled asking a couple of meetings ago whether the club's bank could provide a debit card in the club's name that could be used for this purpose. Matt said the bank was Carter Bank, and the club's account with them dated back to something like 1982. He did not know whether a debit card was available. Glenn F. said he thought there was concern whether having a debit card would make our bank account vulnerable to fraud, and John agreed he thought a credit card would offer more fraud prevention. In answer to Matt's question, John said that with his Amazon account, they simply draft his credit card directly, and he was not sure how he could get statements for the charges to provide to Matt. Thinking about something like a denial of services attack, Glenn F. asked about the chances of something like that causing us to suddenly get a very large bill. John did not know, but said that his wife's website is through Amazon Web Services. The largest monthly bill they had ever seen was about \$5. Glenn Holliday suggested denial of service attacks typically target a server and not some specific site on it. Bart suggested this card purchase could be a trial, and if finding out the specific charges proved too complicated, we could consider the card purchase was the expenditure. There was discussion about whether some prepaid credit cards were refillable and some not. Mark said "green dot" cards were refillable at Walmart for a fee. Glenn F. proposed tabling the motion for a month so that Matt could find out whether Carter Bank offers a prepaid VISA card we could purchase with our account and we could find out what else is available, if necessary.

All Glenn F. had on Facebook or Groups.io was that the latter was running smoothly and that members who failed to renew by the end of March would be dropped from the list.

- Equipment Inventory—Scott Busby did not have any news about equipment, but said he had been in conversation with new member Steve Walk, who would visit to check out the equipment available and try to see what he might like to borrow.

New Business

- Other Items—Glenn F. said we had already discussed the PayPal balance transfer threshold question he had on his agenda, so he asked whether anyone else had anything to discuss. Glenn Holliday said he was contacted by a Cub Scout group in Fredericksburg seeking someone to talk at one of their meetings. While he thought he would be able to accommodate them, he had not yet replied and wanted to know whether another club member might be interested in doing it. He also said the Scouts would be interested in attending a star party during one of the warm months. Glenn F. filled him in on the possibility of doing a Messier Marathon star party one day after the March 24 to April 1 window, but he also had another commitment. Troy Major said he could go. Glenn F. asked about the Girl Scout group that wanted to attend a star party. They had not picked another date so far, but April 2 would not likely be their choice (Glenn H. would not be there).

Glenn F. said we were now up to 41 members for 2022 compared with our total of 65 at the end of last year. He asked for suggestions about our meeting format, and Claire Gardiner said she had taken advantage of the free introduction to amateur astronomy offered by the Kalamazoo Astronomical Society (KAS). It was a series of five webinars held every other Saturday, covering a good range of topics from telescopes and binoculars to astrophotography and more. She found it very educational and thoroughly enjoyed it. When asked whether recordings were available, she said she had email links but did not know whether she was allowed to share them. (The KAS announcement of the series was in a message forwarded by Glenn F., and the link to the KAS website leads to a description that includes the link to the KAS YouTube channel for recordings people can watch afterward.) Glenn H. mentioned a similar introduction was available free on YouTube, the PBS Crash Course Astronomy. He said even for a more experienced amateur, there was usually something interesting in each 15-minute segment. He said he would share the link on our Groups.io list. Glenn F. talked about a Duke University online astronomy class he took through Coursera a few years ago. Although it was called an *introduction* to astronomy, he thought it was more like astrophysics with a lot of math. He thought he spent 8 hours a week on the homework problems but he learned a lot. He said he would see if it was still being offered.

John said he had found that he could get monthly invoices from Amazon for the cloud service. Matt said he thought it would be better for John to purchase the card rather than going through the bank, because he would have to be added to the account for that.

Next Meeting

The next meeting is on Wednesday, April 20, 2022, at 8:00 p.m. It is planned as an online meeting.