

Rappahannock Astronomy Club

Minutes, April 19, 2023, Online Meeting

In attendance:

Bart Billard, Secretary
Linda Billard, *StarGazer* Editor
Glenn Faini, President
Andy Hulon

Peter Laky
Troy Major
Matthew Scott, Treasurer
Myron Wasiuta, Vice President

The meeting began with introductions for Peter Laky's first meeting. Eight members attended.

Old Business

- President's Report—Glenn Faini said there was no presentation for this meeting, but the May meeting would have one on Light pollution by Laura Greenleaf.
- Treasurer's Report—Matt Scott said we had several new members, a couple of new student members, and a couple of Astronomical League dues payments came in in March. He said another new student member joined this month. The total payments in March were \$107.50, and there were no expenditures.
- Vice President's Report—Glenn F. gave the report for Myron. He said Corey Dallmeyer had an outreach in Bowling Green on April 10. Corey held it early because he and his family were headed to the Midwest for some dark skies. Glenn thought he was in Missouri and said he had sent some nice images made with his night vision setup. Glenn said Myron would head out to Natural Bridge State Park for an outreach on April 22. Myron explained that he and his wife liked camping at state parks, and this would be his first try at combining that with volunteer work in the form of an outreach. He talked with Kenneth Horowitz, the lead ranger at Natural Bridge, who told him this would be their first year trying astronomy programs. Myron would be one of their guest speakers for the program they had already scheduled for this month. He would also take one of his telescopes and provide views of the sky, weather permitting. Myron said he hoped to do such outreach events at least every other month this summer and into the fall, not necessarily all at Natural Bridge State Park. He said he had become formally registered as a State Park volunteer for astronomy. He just had to fill out some paperwork and express an interest in doing that. They performed a background check, and once that cleared, he became an official volunteer with expertise in astronomy. He mentioned one benefit of doing that was that if all the regular campsites were occupied when he arrived, the park would make a spot available to pitch a tent, or in Myron's case park the camper. Myron also mentioned he was doing an outreach at James River State Park on May 6. He said Corey would do another there in June that he would probably miss because of a conflict with an optometry meeting. He encouraged interested club members to talk with him or Corey about volunteering to go as their helpers. Glenn asked whether Natural Bridge State Park had camping facilities, and Myron said they don't allow camping but would let him park his camper in a field near where the event would be held.

Myron gave an update on the York County Astronomical Society (YCAS) radio telescope project. He said they were putting the finishing touches on the telescope, and he thought it could be online soon. He was going to get in touch with their president and another YCAS member, who were now also RAC members, to set up some training for them on the MSRO telescopes in aid of planning for some joint visual and radio observations of a star.

- Secretary's Report—Bart Billard just mentioned finishing the minutes for March and posting them on the club website.
- *StarGazer* Report—Linda Billard said she was desperately looking for inputs for the next newsletter due out at the end of the month. She suggested people simply writing about a new piece of equipment they liked or didn't like, or something done recently. Half a page would be sufficient. She said she had commitments from Myron and Scott Busby. She said she has often written about something NASA is doing or some other astronomy news, but Myron has told her the most interesting articles were usually about something another club member is doing. Troy Major said he was breaking in a new camera he could try to write something about. She

mentioned she needed inputs for this newsletter within a week, and he thought he could get something to her.

- MSRO Report—Myron reported that Station 1 was offline because of structural integrity issues. He said the ravages of rain and wind and trees falling near it had taken their toll on the dome and the structure that supports the dome to the point where it needed major repairs that he did not have time at present to do. He was taking the equipment out to store inside his house until we could decide whether to rebuild the station or repurpose its equipment to another station. Myron said Station 2, with a 10-inch RC, and Station 3, with a 4-inch apochromatic refractor, were operational. Also, we were getting ready to have Station 4 online in another few months as a fully automatic station with an 80-mm refractor. Mike Klosterman was working on the automated control of the roof and planned to include an override that would sense if an unparked telescope was in the way, along with sensing when opening was complete. Myron spent some time discussing how he was spread rather thin with maintenance and repairs, doing training and being in the finishing stages of sponsoring a high-school student's research project. That project was on a variable star called EI Ursae Majoris, a micronova that they had been observing since last year. He indicated that possibilities of scaling back on stations that were not getting much use and addressing what to do about the Station 1 repairs needed, given that its location was lately not very good for sky access, would be on the agenda for the next MSRO meeting.
- Communications Report—Glenn said John Maynard had told him of doing a website backup, updating WordPress, and updating two themes—Glenn was not sure what that last item did. He said 16 club members who had not renewed had been dropped from Groups.io at the beginning of the month, in keeping with the club members only policy.
- Club Equipment Inventory—Glenn said Scott Busby had told him there were no new items to report this month.

New Business

- Upcoming Events—Glenn F. said we had already heard from Myron about a James River State Park outreach event in May. Myron added that he was hosting the one on May 5 and 6 and that Corey was hosting another in June.
- Other Items—Glenn F. reported our membership was up to 60 plus 2 complementary memberships for Jim Browder from Richmond and Lauren Lennon from MSRO so far. He thought we could exceed our high of 65 members in 2021 this year.

He then said he had covered everything he had for the meeting and asked for new items. Myron reminded everyone to watch the launch the next morning. Troy said he thought there was a satellite predicted to reenter the atmosphere about 9:30 p.m. after the meeting, but that the predictions did not indicate where it would land. He thought it was a NASA satellite that had been up for 20 years.

Next Meeting

The next meeting is on Wednesday, May 17, 2023, at 7:00 p.m. It is planned as an online meeting.