

19:02 – meeting started (Randy Hemann)

Attendees

16+1 present: Randy Hemann, Jim Blackwell, Mike Carlin, Mike Benson, Bob Fealey, Rob Reid, Jeff Newland, Josef Chlachula, Luka Bajzer, Jerome Taubel, Bill Davidson, Julie Gawarecki, John Martin, John Attewell (Zoom), Greta Gosewisch, Mike Quirk, and Brandon Wyman.

Treasurer's Report

Julie.

- 21 renewed members, 3 members are multi-year. 24 total members.
- Starting balance: \$7800.16
- Income:
 - \$420.63
 - \$255.00
 - \$154.11
- Transfer \$4000.00 to NCRAL 2025 fund. Cover hotel cushion.
- Ending Balance: \$5039.45
 - Checking balance: \$4489.45
 - Second checking: \$600.00
 - Newsletter Funds: -\$50.00
- Julie indicated that she had not yet received anything from either of the two science fairs. Usually by now, she would have received something from the Gateway Science Fair and [???]. She asked if we should do a conditional approval of funds to go to the two science fairs. We typically give \$100 to Gateway and \$50 to [???]. Randy made a motion to approve \$150 to go to the science fairs, \$100 to Gateway and \$50 to [???]. Luka seconded the motion. All ayes, no one opposed. Funding \$150 to go to the science fairs approved.

Repurposing Library Telescope(s)

- Randy explained that the library staff had somehow lost the link to the club. They no longer had a person/contact to maintain the two remaining telescopes remaining.

- Randy indicated we needed a discussion on ideas for how the club should re-purpose the telescopes.
- Randy indicated that parts could be sourced from another place if needed.
- Randy indicated that he already knew of a place that had interest.
- Randy asked if any members had ideas on where the telescopes could be used.
- Julie suggested that one telescope could go to the Spring Grove Public Library, in memory of Dean Johnson. Julie further added that she has a brother-in-law that lives in the Stewartville area that would be able to maintain the telescope.
- Jay asked if there was a reason why the library wanted to return them to the club. Randy said that they lost the email link to request maintenance. Randy further clarified that the telescopes had already been retrieved from the Rochester Public Library.
- Josef said that it was a wonderful idea to have the telescope in memory of Dean. Josef suggested that the Nature Center at Oxbow Park would be another place that a telescope could go. It would be useful during the lectures the club members give there as part of outreach activities over the winter months. It is part of the park system that we already have a working relationship with. Josef could send a “What if” email to Lonnie. Josef further added that Oxbow Park has a Facebook presence with over 3000 followers, so they have a good audience.
- Julie indicated that she should go back over the information she had on the third telescope. It had some damage sustained while in possession of a library patron. She indicated that the library did have a signed waiver that every patron had to sign in order to check out the telescope, but they had had no interest in pursuing a claim/reimbursement for damages. Julie can see what it would take to get that third telescope back in working order. Luka asked how extensive the damage was to that third telescope. He was wondering about the mirror. Julie indicated that the mirror was okay, it was mainly damage to the eyepieces.
- Mike Q. asked for confirmation that these telescopes are not made anymore. Luka said that yes, they are no longer made, but there are clones. Julie indicated that she thought the AstroLeague had updated information on a model to modify for library projects. Josef said that High Point Scientific makes a library-ready telescope. Jeff N. said that he had received an email from them regarding a buy out of the telescope parts. Mike C. was aware of a sale where one could have bought a pallet of binoculars for a couple hundred bucks. The catch was a pickup, in person, at a location in California, on an exact date.

- Randy indicated that we had some good options to consider for re-purposing the library telescopes.

Club Website Update

John Martin.

- John Martin had a presentation with 5 or 6 slides, which he indicated did not need to be done now if time was needed for the other items on the agenda. Randy said that we should go over it now, so John did his presentation on the changes.
- Our previous IT services through Greengeeks had a bunch of challenges. It was not so much the website, but the infrastructure underneath it.
- There were downtimes that accumulated to hours per month.
- The ability to send and receive emails was becoming very diminished. GMail started blocking the emails sent out to members and friends of the club. The provider had false accusations of abuse that John had to periodically monitor for and respond to, especially each time Randy would send out the meeting notice to the members.
- The server our services ran on was a shared server, other entities were flagging it with abuse reports. Those external abuse reports eventually lead to Hotmail, MSN, and Yahoo blocking emails.
- There was a decision made to drop Greengeeks as our service provider and migrate our services to some companies that John had worked with before.
- More volunteers to help support the club's IT services were also gathered, to avoid a single point of failure (John).
- RacNerd is the new server host. Full root and dedicated IP. The new website now runs on a Linux virtual server. We have our own IP address, not a shared IP address.
- The service chosen to be used for email distribution is Gaggle Mail. There is already more success noticed with email getting delivered.
- MXRoot is used for the email service, such as president@, treasurer@, etc.
- John created a document with company information, credential information, etc. This has been shared with the club executives and the IT volunteers.
- All these IT services are owned by the club, they are not in John's name.
- Luka asked about the amount of time needed per month for applying patches. John indicated that it is not much, probably about an hour a month. John indicated that he has an autorenewal setup for the certificates which are through LetsEncrypt.
- The website has had 100% uptime over the past 30 days.

- There is some kind of Search Engine Optimization in our favor as well now.
- John did have to fill out and submit a form to SpamHouse to rectify our bad reputation with email.
- Mike C. asked about our DEMARC records. John clarified that before, we did not have the ability to create our own DEMARC records when our email service was through Greengeeks. Now, we have control over our own DEMARC records. This is sort of a certificate that goes with email service.
- Bob Fealey uses an @MSN.com account and indicated that he did NOT receive the last meeting notice that Randy had sent out. John said that they should meet after the meeting. There is a way that they can run a trace to see where that email went. John suspected that something on the MSN.com side automatically flagged it as spam and sent it to the junk folder due to the previous service getting it a bad reputation.
- The last slide had some points on what is possibly next:
 - Complete functional documentation.
 - Expand website functionality
 - Articles
 - manage membership dues
 - Customization developments?
- Someone had asked how much this all costs. John indicated it was not a lot, less than \$100/year. John said he paid for it; it is part of his donation to the club.

Use of Current Forum by Members

Randy indicated there are changes we just went over, so we can touch on this topic later.

Member's Observing Notes

- Luka mentioned that he and Josef were out at Root River Park. Four satellite galaxies of Andromeda, Luka's attempt failed. NGC185 ... NGC147 he also could not find. Mirax Ghost - did find. 12-inch Dobsonian. Easiest galaxy to find. Luka thought it was on the "Herschel 400" list, but indicated that it probably was not memorable. Jay McLaren did not recall that one. Saturn's rings, [???], but still visible.
- Josef. Crispy, clear, COLD. Needed help from Luka to dismantle his telescope, as it was so cold. Josef mentioned his Czech friend. The made some attempts at Mars parallax. Failed. He learned the next steps. Josef said that he needs to write it down.

Josef and his friend have a time difference of several hours: 8:58:53s. Many pics were taken in 10 minutes. Mars is about 100 million kilometers from Earth. Better than 2% precision. Cassini did a Mars parallax measurement involving observations in Paris and some island close to South America. That precision was 10% in 1672. Lifte (???) maps other stars. Luka asked how Cassini was able to do that without photographs. Josef said that timing with GPS makes it simple, cheating. They needed 1-second precision in time. Josef and his friend talked again at a later date, for another attempt, but it was not clear here in Rochester. In about a month, Mars sets too soon for his friend, so further attempts will stop then.

- Randy asked if anyone could beat that, prompting for any further observing notes.
- John Attewell, in Florida, planets straight up over his head. Meridian. John also mentioned seeing a rocket launch.
- Luka - Clear enough. More than dozen stars in Orion. A check to see if Randy was out with his big telescope, but Randy said that he usually does not get that out in the winter.
- Jay McLaren mentioned getting a CStar50 for Christmas. He used it to view M81, 82, Owl, several open clusters. It takes good images. Randy asked if Jay could bring that in for show-and-tell. Jay said that, yeah, he could bring it in to show.
- Luka later had a last minute observing not. He had seen Jupiter and Venus, at 3 in the afternoon. He used binoculars for Jupiter. He was looking from inside his house for one such observation. He said that the moon helps.

RAC Member Award

Randy announced and presented an Exceptional Outreach Award. Jay McClaren was the recipient. This is from the Night Sky Network. A 20th anniversary pin.

Root River Park Commissioners Meeting Report

Josef and Randy.

- "Enhancing Root River Park...". Bob, Josef, Jay, Luka, and Randy were there.
- Area Light Pollution Map. Bob - blue area ... Choice, MN, not at night. Meter details.
- RAC outreach calendar.
- Lonnie said some things in our favor.
- Josef presented an idea on information sign for the park visitors.
- Jay pointed out their request: "Bring us a list of pie in the sky"

- Start simple things, work to more.
- Josef - PDF of master plan to download. Updated every 5 years. Now it is time for brainstorming.
- Luka - next meeting June 3rd. Josef mentioned a meeting at the park. Do a walk through, have a sign (cardboard example).
- Summary:
 - promote astronomical
 - add information signage.
 - future?
 - construct a sundial
 - build a solar system walk
 - house a public telescope.
 - other synergistic endeavors with the RAC.
- Further discussion and Q&A. There was a question about a code box to turn off the lights. Josef indicated that security said no to a code. Certain club members have a key.
- Jay clarified that the master plan is being redone this year. A task for us.
- Josef said that the minutes from the meeting are on the website. He was interested to see them, and noted that it ran from 5:30 to 6:45. Over that time, only 10 minutes was the presentation, the remaining time was 50 minutes of discussion.
- Greta, belongs to other groups, had a question regarding nighttime pollinators. She was interested if anyone knew of example parks. Luka says Voyagers, dark sky association. Greta mentioned a book on bioluminescence: Darkness Manifesto. Randy said that the website (dark sky association) has lots of information.
- Greta also talked about a restaurant by I-90 that has blue light. Josef knows villages with lights out. John recalled a moth guy at the park meeting. Jay said that that guy is not on the board anymore, further adding that he did have an interest in butterflies, moths, etc. Jay - Dewalightiry(?). Chesterwoods Park has.
- Light color comments, from Josef. A 2700 or 2000 temperature is better at night. The type/color of light is a growing industry.

RAC Outreach Report

Josef.

- Friday, March 7th is the next outreach event. Warmer & clear sky, hopefully.

- Jay is doing a presentation.
- April - Randy Northerth Lights.
- Total Lunar Eclipse - March 14th 2 a.m. Begins March 13th at 11 p.m. Thursday night, Friday morning.

Messier Marathon Plans

Messier Marathon 2 weeks after the lunar eclipse. Jeff Newland indicated probably 28th and 29th.

NCRAL Convention Update

RAC members (John, Josef, John, Jay, Julie...) are on the NCRAL Planning Committee.

- Pretty much ready to go.
- NCRAL2025.org
- Friday April 25th through April 27th.
- Check, PDF, Paypal. \$154.
- MAAS members also involved.
- Sending information to non-members in North Dakota and Nebraska.
- John Martin to add a link, dates, and registration deadline (good idea Luka).
- Door prizes.
- More info next week and April.
- John Attewell mentioned 90 max. Randy said that typically 45 attend, but the more we have ...[helps with]... our costs.
- Randy indicated that the full website was available last week.
- Randy had Bill talk about NCRAL Awards and the Astrophotography contest. Bill indicated that he said no to booting the Sketch Contest. Get a hold of Bill if interested in Astrophotography or Sketching entries.

Review of Dean Johnson's Equipment for Sale

Randy met with Lora Johnson. The family is interested in selling equipment Dean had. They are trying to reach out to members of the club first. They plan on turning the house into a bed & breakfast. They need to clean out the house.

- Explore Scientific - ED127. Used about 5 times. New \$1800. Used \$1599. 50.

- Randy will post information on various items in the RAC forum. If interested in something, let him know, so he can bring some items of interest to show at a future meeting.
- Meade LX85. Average/ 3 of 5 stars. Tracks well. 33 pounds. \$1299 new. Discontinued.
- Celestron C-8 \$1700. Has a telrad (Dean did not like Telrads).
- Celestron C-11 \$2500.
- Orion SkyView Pro Mount.
- 9x50 finder.
- Eyepieces. Filters.
- Celestron Dual Axis Motor, B&H Photo.
- Spectrometer? Randy will definitely bring that to a future meeting.
- 2 more Telrads.
- Mike C asked about Dean's journals. Randy said that Lora said that they plan on making a copy to give to us. John Attewell said that he is willing to do/help. John found Dean's journals fascinating. Randy will relay John's message to Lora.
- Jerome suggested a swap meet at NCRAL. Sell some items there? Randy said there is not, yet, a plan to organize a swap meet.

Other

Josef mentioned his friend, from earlier observing notes, is going to Chile for a week to do some observing. Josef turned down the invite, but maybe he should plan something for next year. Josef was wondering about RAC member interest in travel to Chile for observing.

Josef's friend will be on a Santiago flight, then to San Pedro. About 6 miles south is a ranch where he will rent time on telescopes. At least we have a contact to get further information, ask questions, etc. Neither Josef nor his friend speak Spanish, so that should not be a deterrent. Rob suggested that one find out about altitude sickness before such an excursion. Jerome pointed out that some locations are at 7,897 feet.

Next Month

Luka has a presentation next month.

20:36 - adjourned.