

Rappahannock Astronomy Club

Minutes, May 12, 2010, Meeting

In attendance:

- David Bentz
- Barton Billard
- Scott Busby
- Don Clark
- Joe and Sherry Francis
- Ronny Heflin
- Glenn Holliday
- Mike Masters
- Tim Plunkett
- Debbie Sandler
- Javier and Ruby Valverde

President Mike Masters started introductions at 6:45 while people were still arriving. Twelve members and 2 visitors attended. A new visitor told us he found out about the Club while researching a telescope purchase. He found a favorable review of a telescope he was leaning toward that also strongly recommended someone choosing a telescope by finding a local astronomy club to help find out what telescope works for him. A search led to our Club and information about the meeting.

Program

Scott Busby gave a repeat of his talk on webcam astrophotography. Notes on his talk are posted on the Club website as a separate document. See the Documents page.

Treasurer's Report

Tim Plunkett gave the report for April 30, 2010. Three members paid dues in April, bringing paid membership is up to 22 as of the end of the month. Tim said he received the bill from the Astronomical League but had not opened it yet. It was unclear when the Club needs to decide whether to continue membership, but the vote last year came at the May meeting. Mike asked whether the Club members feel the benefits of membership are commensurate with the cost. He said that *Astronomy* and *Sky and Telescope* magazine discounts have not helped us because of the requirement for five members purchasing subscriptions to the same magazine to qualify. Canvases of the members at this meeting and the last did not find the necessary number interested. Glenn added that other benefits of membership in the Astronomical League include supporting outreach through Astronomical League programs and the observing programs to help develop amateur astronomy skills. By consensus, the Club deferred the question of whether to continue membership to the next meeting, with the possibility the Club executives might have to facilitate a decision between meetings if the deadline for renewal comes before June 9.

Old business

- Club assets—Bart read last month's minutes on the disposition of Club assets. Rachel and Brad Herzog still have the Club Dob. Mike still has the Personal Solar Telescope and volunteered as custodian so that he could facilitate having it available for outreach events like the Earth Day event. Brenda has the equatorial scope but was not present to get the counterweights from Tim. Don Clark brought in the Celestron and said he would serve as custodian. Mike has the CCD camera and brought the NextStar 5 to transfer to Bart as the new custodian. (Tim brought the newly purchased tripod to go with it.)
- Star party and event reports— The Earth Day event was a no-go because of cloudy weather. The Sun was not visible for the Club Personal Solar Telescope. The star party May 8 at Caledon was windy but decent. Mike, Glenn, and Bart and Linda were there with telescopes. Dave Bentz stopped by to say hi before dark, but was too tired from activities during the day to stay around. Two families of visitors came for views through the telescopes, and one club-associated family arrived after dark.

Forecasts for the May 15 backup date were unfavorable, and Mike proposed canceling the date, with ample notice to Caledon, because our primary date was successful.

- Next star party and other events—The Curtis Park outreach event is May 22. The next Caledon star party is June 5. June 12 is the date for the Club-only event at Milam Gap on Skyline Drive in Shenandoah Park. On June 14, the Club is supporting Space Day at Conway Elementary School in Stafford County. The last event was very successful, with a large crowd attending. Mike said extra support is needed to provide more telescopes to handle the number of viewers expected. We also have our first outreach at Westmoreland State Park this year scheduled for June 19. Mike indicated he would probably skip the Skyline event because of the heavy schedule of outreach events that need support. The new contact at Westmoreland is Shanna Morris.

New Business

- Joe Francis received an invitation to support the Battery Park Star Party on 4/5 June in New York associated with the World Science Festival. He is thinking of going and may have a seat or two available in his truck for other Club volunteers to join him. He said he would send information out on the Club email lists.
- Glenn told us about an opportunity for amateurs to assist NASA starting this week by looking at high-resolution images of the Moon. The program is on the Web at www.moonzoo.org. People can help with crater counts that help determine how old various parts of the lunar surface are.
- Joe Francis won the 50-50 raffle drawing this evening.

Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for June 9, 2010, 7:00 p.m., at the Central Rappahannock Regional Library Headquarters, 1201 Caroline St., in Fredericksburg. Introductions will begin at 6:45 p.m.

Submitted by Bart Billard, Secretary