

# Rappahannock Astronomy Club

## Minutes, November 10, 2010, Meeting

In attendance:

- Barton Billard
- Don Clark
- Scott Busby
- George Clarke
- Glenn Faini
- Joe & Sherry Francis
- Rob Friedel
- Leigh Gettier
- Ranny Heflin
- Glenn Holliday
- Dan Lien
- Mike Masters

President Mike Masters began the meeting at 7 p.m. Thirteen members were present. Plenty of pizza, drinks, and cookies were provided. Thanks to volunteers Joe, Don, Rob, and Leigh, and to Mike for bringing plates, napkins, etc.

## Old Business

- Mike presented Tim's Treasurer's report for October 30, 2010. Two new members' dues payments were recorded. (Since October, new member dues are considered valid for 2011.) The Club has 29 members as of the end of October counting the two late joiners. The expenditure for October was a reimbursement to Don for the purchase of the Celestron alt-az tripod now in use with the Club Personal Solar Telescope (PST). Mike brought up reimbursement of the volunteers who brought food for the meeting. Dan moved and Scott seconded reimbursement of Joe in the amount of \$67.34 from Club funds for the pizza. The motion passed. Joe gave Bart the receipt. Leigh moved, with a second from Dan for the Club to reimburse Don \$10 for the drink purchase, and this motion passed as well.
- Elections for 2011 Club officers—Mike presented the list of nominees from the October meeting: Bart for Secretary, Tim for Treasurer, Joe for Vice President, and Mike for President. He opened the floor for additional nominations, but there were none. Scott moved to accept the slate of nominees, and Rob seconded the motion. The motion passed on a voice vote. Mike raised the possibility of having a December party in place of pizza at the November meeting associated with the elections, given the unavailability of a meeting place at Pizza Hut. December can be a busy month for some. Scott noted that a Bylaws amendment would be necessary to change the time of elections.
- Club loaner equipment status—Ann Aleo has the PST and could not come to the meeting. Ranny responded to the request for a volunteer living near her to pick it up, along with the tripod. Mike is expecting delivery of his own Lunt solar telescope and will be able to support solar viewing outreach events without needing to be the Club PST custodian. Ranny said he would like to be the custodian in that case. Bart has custody of the NexStar. Don has custody of the Comet Catcher. Scott is to be the custodian of the 8-inch Dobsonian. Ranny has the 6-inch Dob. Ivana has not yet returned the folder to go with the latter. Mike said he will propose purchase of another of the star chart books previously discussed as possible accessories to go with the loaner equipment accessory folders.
- Events—The November 13 outreach event was cancelled because it was not possible to arrange for the lights to be out. It has to be done through Dominion Power. We tried to hold the November 5 star party but the clouds were worse than forecast. As they started to fill in soon after dark only Mike, Bart, and Linda remained, and all decided to pack up and leave. As Mike was leaving, it started to sprinkle lightly. Mike surveyed interest for using the November 13 backup date. Joe was the only member who thought he could go. The conclusion was that we should cancel the backup. The next primary date is December 3, a Friday, at Caledon. The backup is December 11. Our next meeting is December 8, with Glenn Holliday giving a program on Astronomy Camp. Meeting dates for 2011 have been verified with CRRL.
- Star party calendar for 2011—Mike has provided the proposed 2011 star party schedule to Caledon. He has not received their response yet.

- Club mailing lists—Mike has sent the notice to cease operation of the raclub@m31.us mailing list. There was a problem with information initially provided on the Yahoo rac\_group alternative. Scott believes you have to set up a Yahoo profile and join the group in order to have the mail forwarded to you. It is not possible to have list server only access. In addition, Scott is only a group moderator for rac\_group, which was set up by Tom Pendergast with Tom as owner. We need to ask Tom to pass ownership of rac\_group over to Scott in addition to the request about discontinuing raclub@m31.us and transferring the raclub.org domain name. Consensus was for Mike to discuss these arrangements with Tom after coordinating with Tim.
- Donation of red LED lights to mark telescope locations at star parties – Sarah Holloway had suggested marker lights as an enhancement of star parties that she had observed in California. At Mike’s request, she was going to provide links showing the type of light. Actually, she went ahead and donated 12 lights to the Club. Thanks to Sarah Holloway.
- *Sky & Telescope* subscription discount status—There was no new progress on the *Sky & Telescope* Club discount arrangement. Mike tried to contact the person at *Sky & Telescope* who provided information before, but she is no longer the right contact. He suggests he would go ahead and subscribe rather than waiting for this arrangement to be resolved. It is not necessary for a member to wait to subscribe to help the Club qualify.
- Meeting programs for 2011—Mike reviewed the program schedule for next year. Myron has indicated that he might be able to offer one or two programs. If so, Mike could postpone his own October program to make room for one from Myron. The program is now available on the [Meetings](#) page of the Club website.
- RAC presence on Facebook—Glenn Faini talked about possibility of a group presence on Facebook. To illustrate what it would mean, he showed NOVAC’s page, which is a minimal example. On the main page, it has some information about NOVAC, a link to their website, and a place for members. It has tabs to other pages such as a “wall tab” where things can be posted. One has to “join” the Facebook group, which can be open or require moderator approval. NOVAC is the only astronomy group you see on Facebook with a search on “Virginia astronomy clubs.” A tab allows posts of events, but we might omit this to avoid duplicating our other announcements on the Club website and list server. Joe suggested it can be considered a gateway to our usual sources of communication and can be set up on a trial basis, then removed if desired. Joe made a motion to try a Facebook entry, with Glenn as moderator, for an evaluation period of 90 days, followed by a reevaluation of whether to continue or what adjustments to make. Leigh and Rob both seconded the motion. The vote was in favor.
- Astronomical League membership—Mike reviewed the options under consideration and results of a survey via the Club email list of preferences. Most surveyed preferred the option B: Club membership fee of \$10 paid out of Club funds, and individual membership optional and paid separately by members who want it. This option probably will result in a cost of \$7.50 for individual membership because qualification for the \$5.00 discount rate requires 95% of Club members to participate. Currently the Club is paying the discount rate for all members out of Club funds. Glenn made a motion in favor of adapting option B, and Scott seconded. This motion passed on a voice vote, with no “nays.”

## New Business

- Request for interview on black holes or Hubble—Xavier Jenerette requested an interview on black holes or Hubble for a Stafford High School project. Mike referred the request to Myron, who is trying to arrange it.
- Request for a star party at Stratford Hall—Mike was contacted about the possibility of holding a star party event next year at Stratford Hall in Westmoreland County. Considerable back and forth discussion about format and a suitable site appears to have led to an understanding that we might be able to put on an informal event similar to what we are doing for Westmoreland State Park. The Stratford Hall representative originally had in mind a more elaborate affair including lectures or presentations. The proposed date is October 1, which is nearly first quarter Moon. Mike showed a map and indicated the agreed location: a central open area called the Oval and said he got agreement that we could park there to facilitate set up and packing away our equipment. They may charge guests a fee for fund-raising purposes and a meal. Glenn Holliday, Joe, Ranny, Rob, Dan,

Scott, Glenn Faini, Mike, Bart, and Leigh expressed interest in participating. Mike will reply in the affirmative, subject to clear skies and doing an event like we do for Westmoreland.

- Contacts requesting support—Glenn Holliday said a Charlottesville group contacted him about support for an event by our Club. He asked if they had checked with their local club and put them in touch when he found out they were not aware of the club. He also has a request from a Girl Scout for support for a daytime event. He is waiting for word from them about the proposed date, and hopes to be able to take the Club Solar telescope. Mike said he could help, depending on the date. The planned location is the Old Greenwich Shopping Center on Lafayette.
- George related that on occasion the astronomy Club where he lived before took donations for holding some of their events. Mike noted that doing so could carry obligations and cited the original expectations of the Stratford Hall representative. Glenn pointed out that the Club has not established nonprofit status.
- Scott offered the Messier Marathon star party date or its backup as a possibility for him hosting a star party in 2011. He also announced that he and Debbie got married.
- Joe made a clarification on a recent neutron star observation in the news that he described in his program at the previous meeting. He said that upon rereading the report, he realized the mass of the neutron star has not been determined. The mass given, 40 times the mass of the Sun, was the mass of the star that formed the neutron star.

## Next Meeting

The next meeting is December 13, 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