



# *The Sycamore Islander*

OCTOBER 2016 | VOLUME 95 NUMBER 10

## Minutes for the September 14th Meeting

**Attendees:** Geoff Holdridge, John Noble, Richard Bertaut, Tryon Wells, Marianne Ross, Ned Goddard, Sherry Pettie Fizdale, Jim Drew, Jane Winer

The meeting was called to order by President Wells shortly after 8:00.

**Minutes:** Due to lack of a quorum Minutes of previous month's meeting could not be approved.

**Treasurer's Report:** Ned Goddard reviewed the club's mid-year financial status and the outlook for 2017, reminding us that the club's budget will be presented in November.

2016 is a "Lottery Year," in which the club gets a financial boost from new member applications and memberships. We took in \$105K and had an expected budget of approximately \$92K for the year. The

Treasurer had hoped the excess could be used to reinforce our reserve, which has been slightly decreasing each of the last few years but in 2016, three unbudgeted items consumed the extra money we took in: Filling in the sinkhole/well, an increase to the club's flood insurance, and Caretaker health expenses. Hence, the reserve (a target of approximately \$85K, or one year of the club's operating budget) will continue to shrink because of these unplanned expenses—despite the Treasurer's best efforts to budget for a positive year end outcome, so Ned expects to recommend a dues increase for 2017, a non-Lottery Year, to reverse this trend.

This year's facility budget includes completing the clubhouse painting project that started in 2014, replacement of windows on the north side of Caretaker's quarters, and repair/replacement of clubhouse screen doors. Ned recommended these projects be completed this fall, as facility upkeep is a priority for the club.

**Vice President's Report:** Richard Bertaut read a letter of resignation submitted by Drew Walsh, effective immediately. It is understood that Deputy Captain, Rodolfo Castro, will continue as Acting Captain until December.

**Membership Chairman's Report:** John Noble reported that Cora Shaw wants to become an inactive member. He also reported that 2 prospective members have only a little more time to submit two recommendations in order to be voted in (or out) of Club Membership.

**Relief Caretaker's Report:** In the absence of Madeleine Carter, no report was submitted.

Per last month's report, however, she may still be looking for volunteers for October and November. Please contact her at [madeleinepcarter@gmail.com](mailto:madeleinepcarter@gmail.com) to volunteer.

**New Business:** As the meeting lacked a quorum, discussion that followed was free-wheeling. The Regatta, for instance, was reported by all who attended a great success, credit due to the leadership of Steve and Mia Holland who, it was pointed out, are still only on the waiting list. Steve and Mia were key in making last year's Regatta successful as well—with the vigorous support of their children. It was suggested that the family be accepted into membership by acclamation ASAP but there is no provision at this time for this step in the Club Constitution.

The discussion included an extended tribute to the dedication and leadership of Drew Walsh who has been our Captain since 2012, Deputy Captain since 2010, but even before we came to know him as Relief Caretaker for an extended period of time—and he was offered membership at that time for his stellar performance. We will miss his thoughtful and steady hand as Captain, one whose heart and mind focused on the benefit and beauty of Sycamore Island Club.

John Noble reminded us that the deadline for the newsletter is usually at the end of the month, and this year, he noted, is Carol Beehler's last year as editor. We will miss Carol, who has done an outstanding job making the newsletter stunning photographically. Her professional touch made *The Islander* a delight to read. In the meantime we must look to membership for her successor.

Other subjects covered included replacing clubhouse screen doors that are deteriorating, exterior painting

that needs to be done to Caretaker's quarters, and replacing storm windows there as well. The Fall Workfest is coming up and we need to plan now for all that needs to be done to maintain Island grounds, clubhouse and residence over the winter.

It was reported that a member would like to see a platform installed near ferry steps to lock up and leave a bicycle. Discussion that followed was not in favor of the idea.

Geoff Holdridge talked about a fall Hallowe'en party at which he and his group could play—gratis—if there is interest. The Treasurer noted that there are funds in the budget for such a celebration. Geoff will talk with organizers of fall parties of the past two years.

There was discussion about the poles on the canoeing dock, one a simple metal pole and the other, a device made of wood with a horizontal arm designed and built by Steve Newman with assistance from David Winer and Rodolfo Castro, not so simple. Jane Winer, for one, recommended that you have a friend with you when you are figuring how to use it getting in and—especially out—of your boat.

Jim Drew noted difficulty he has had using a canoe cart by himself largely because of a riser needed where the gangplank meets a flat surface, before and aft.

The current lack of lighting to illuminate the path to the parking lots was mentioned but the question as to why it has not been restored was left unanswered.

At 9:17, the meeting was adjourned by President Tryon Wells.

The next meeting of the Sycamore Island Club will be held on Wednesday, October 12 at 8:00 p.m. on the Island.

Respectfully submitted,  
JANE WINER  
Acting Recording Secretary

### Departing Club Captain

It has been an honor serving as Captain since 2012 and Deputy Captain for two years prior to that. Working with dedicated members, as so many of us volunteer our time to keep the club functioning, has been a great learning and rewarding experience for me.

Early on, I observed that the club's functionality is only possible with loyal and generous volunteering members, who are able to devote free time to the task.

Unfortunately, at this point in my life, I must devote more time other priorities. I can no longer devote the time needed to carry out and fulfill the duties and obligations of Club Captain.

Thank you to club members, wait list applicants, and the caretaker for making my job easier to carry out. And an extra thank you to those who designed and implemented so many improvement projects.

I am grateful to the membership for giving me the opportunity to serve the club as Captain.

DREW WALSH

## The New Dock Assistant

After years of weakening knees, it became quite difficult to step in or out of my canoe. So I devised a way to install a metal pole on the Island's canoe dock that provided much needed support for ingress/egress. It turned out that the pole soon became popular with other Islanders, and even youngsters often used it. I wrote an article in *Wooden Canoe* (Dec 2011, v.34, no. 6) journal to share this success with other canoeists.

That pole required wooden structural modification beneath the dock to anchor it solidly in order to resist high bending forces at its attachment point. Tryon Wells and I made this fix during the off season when the dock was high and dry.

Years later, when the club purchased a commercial canoe dock, the trusty old pole was cast aside because there was no practical way to attach it to the plastic surface. I managed a makeshift bolt-on of the pole to a side tab, but this scheme failed as too flexible. Other canoeists and I were bereft of this support that we had come to rely on. Engineer Steve Newman had led the committee responsible for the new dock so we looked





to him to come up with a replacement pole. He responded admirably.

Steve's first design was a mainly wooden construction that mounted to the dock's inner structure as well as the side tabs. This scheme worked well for a while until a principal wooden slab fractured along the grain-line. Steve re-designed the structure completely to obviate this weakness, and to incorporate more attachment points to the dock. Then he gathered the materials and tools needed, and enlisted carpentry-qualified helpers Rodolfo Castro and me. We three held our own Work Fest one Sunday to do the installation.

Much cutting and fitting ensued. We set up the new canoe cart as a workbench and brought power down from the canoe shed to the dock with long electrical cords. Rodolfo and Steve worked the hardware fittings on their knees at river level but stretched out prone much of the time. The day wore on and, as they say, "we got 'er done."

The most obvious feature of the new "pole" is that it's not a pole at all, but an arm that hangs over the water as an aid to canoeists (and kayakers). This geometry may not work well for some because a floating craft of any sort won't stay in place when the boater's feet first contact the bottom. The canoeist, while clinging to the overhanging arm, must counteract the boat's tendency to slip away. One way is to tie up to the dock or have someone hold the boat steady. However, some might find that arm-strength alone will suffice to offset the boat-slipping forces while embarking or getting out.

Give the system a try to find out for yourself if it works for you.

DAVID WINER

## Notes from the Island

Monday, September 12, 2016

Water Level at Little Falls: 2.67 Water Temperature: 82

It's already been a week since Labor day but I have to tell you about the great time we had that day. There was no required RSVP for this event so we had no idea how many people might show up for the festivities but the turn-out was spectacular. At one point I went around and counted heads and I came up with 120 members, waitlisters and guests kept arriving all day. The 60 burgers and 40 hot dogs that we grilled were gone almost instantly! I guess the perfect weather helped to swell the crowds but it's also a great sign that the club is vibrant and full of energetic new members and waitlisters. A big "Thank You" goes out to Mia and Steve who organized and administered the event. We are really lucky to have such fun and willing people amongst our ranks. We also need to thank Scott for supplying all the squirt guns and organizing that part of the day. And thanks to everyone that brought dishes and desserts and helped with the food and grilling. It was a very fun and hugely successful club event.

I just found out that there is no school again today so I'll be expecting the bell to ring quite a bit. I thought that things would begin to slow down now that the kids are back in school, but that hasn't really been the case. It seems that once folks get into the habit of coming to the Island, they start to come down more often. There was more than one couple that came down five days in a row last week! I can't say that I blame them, the weather and river conditions have been superb lately. The water is cool and clear and the weather has been mostly rain free.

This lack of rain means that the river is still very low and it is still very hard to get the ferry close to the dock on the Island side. I have been dredging the river bed but it's starting to look like we may need to extend the dock out into the river to make it easier to get on and off of the ferry. Not much rain but there were some dam releases from upstream this past week that I thought might help the situation. (Every September they lower the water levels at Randolph-Jennings lake on the north branch and Savage Lake on the Savage River.) I was hoping that those small water releases might make a difference to the water level down here but so far there has not been a noticeable improvement.

# regatta 2016



DAVID WINER



DAVID WINER

DAVID WINER





JOE HAGE

Clubhouse before painting



JOE HAGE

Clubhouse after painting

### Tuesday, September 13, 2016

**Water Level at Little Falls: 2.69 Water Temperature: 82**

It's beaver time again. Those little buggers are busy all night wreaking havoc. Last night's victim was the mulberry tree here by the boardwalk. They didn't get the whole tree, just some large branches growing out of the sides. The funny thing is that when the beaver tried to drag the branch to the water it got hung up on the ropes holding up the volley ball net. When the beaver got close to the shore, the rope went taut and the beaver pulled the net down while trying to free the branch from the rope. This morning we found the branch all tangled up in the rope by the shore.

No Great Egrets this year. There is no way to predict when these majestic birds will decide to hang around here, but this was not the year. Some years we'll have a dozen or so Great Egrets gathering in the dead tree just up stream from here.

### Thursday, September 15, 2016

**Water Level at Little Falls: 2.68 Water Temperature: 80**

Big news, I finally finished painting the back of the clubhouse! It was a lot of scaping and sanding but I think we have a paint job that is going to last us for a while. It is so gratifying to see the clubhouse freshly painted, transformed from its former dilapidated self. Thanks to everyone that had to endure the irritating sound of the orbital sander running for hours. My next painting project will be the siding on the exterior of my living room. This addition to the original building was built relatively recently, in the 90s, so I think the prep is going to go a lot faster. Less sanding!

Our club kayaks are starting to show their age and I had to patch a hole in the bow of one of the red ones. I also repaired the kayak rack. The metal brackets that I used were not tough enough for the heavy use that they were getting, so I replaced them with wooden supports like I should have done when I built the rack in the first place.

The Jewel Weed is everywhere, it's like our Island is one big Jewel Weed chia-pet! They are starting to wilt a bit now but most of them are still sporting pretty yellow blossoms. It may not be as spectacular as the spring-time Bluebells but it's quite a sight just the same.

One of the club members is missing a kid's life jacket. He had it here for the regatta and now we cannot find it. It may have gone home with the wrong family so please check to make sure you don't have someone else's PFD, it has a whistle on it, thanks. Also, if you lost a fit-bit at the regatta, it's hanging in the lost and found locker.

### Tuesday, September 27, 2016

**Water Level at Little Falls: 2.66 Water Temperature: 72**

Autumn is here! Today you don't have to look at the calendar to know that, just look outside and you'll be able to tell that the warm days of summer have quickly come to an end. The sky is grey and the river is getting colder. We're not complaining though; there is still a lot of green out there and there are still a lot of late summer flowers hanging on. It's a great time of year to get out on the river!

I've been talking a lot about the low river levels but

apparently I've seen the river much lower than it is right now. Back in 2002, when I first became caretaker, the river level was 2.18, or 400 cubic feet per second. Compared with today's reading of 1300 cubic feet per second. The lowest on record was 1966 when the flow was 121 cfps, and for comparison, the highest recorded level in 1936 was 484,000 cfps!

The beaver have been targeting our mulberry tree again. They hauled off a couple of small branches and stripped the bark from the trunk. I think we're going to start calling that tree "The Giving Tree." First it gave us shade then berries for all, and now it is giving it's branches to the beaver. I surrounded the tree with chairs to keep the beaver from destroying it completely.

I've been working my way around the house with the painting and I discovered a lot of exterior wood that is rotted. I guess it's not surprising to find some rotted wood in this shady, wet environment but I think there are some things I can do to minimize it in the future. I removed and replaced all of the rotted window trim and siding and I added some flashing and caulk to try to keep the water out. I can't wait to get the paint on there and get everything sealed up nice and tight.

Mary Kearney and I got written up in the Canal Trust newsletter! Check your latest Canal Quarterly to see a nice write-up about our canalbycanoe.com blog and our successful fund-raiser for Swains Lock! Love the canal, support the Trust!

<http://canalbycanoe.com/canal-by-canoe-featured-in-canal-quarterly-magazine/>

**Friday, September 30, 2016**

**Water Level at Little Falls: 3.34 Water Temperature: 70**

They said that we might get more rainfall than we've seen in five years. So when they predicted that the Potomac river was going to reach ten feet at Little Falls I went into action. The funny thing is, I did all of that flood preparation for nothing. We didn't get the rain they expected and now it looks as if the river will remain calm and we won't have to close the ferry at all. I guess it's a relief. Next week we'll have to watch out for hurricane Matthew.

There is a new group of people using the Island and it seems to be a growing segment of the club membership. I'm talking of course about the grandchildren of members. This seems to be a trend, and more and more members of the club are becoming grandparents. The other trend, that kind of goes hand in hand with

## Announcement!

News and information about our beloved  
**POTOMAC RIVER**

presented by  
**DEAN NAUJOKS**  
of Potomac RiverKeeper!

Wednesday, October 12th  
**SYCAMORE ISLAND**  
before the monthly meeting



Caretaker Joe Hage will be cooking  
burgers and dogs before the presentation.



**6:00–6:45 meet and eat**  
**6:45–7:15 watch sunset**  
**7:30–presentation and club meeting**

**Invite your friends!**  
**Don't miss it! See you there!**

the first, is that many of our members are getting their joints replaced. The good and the bad of aging.

Big news! Potomac Riverkeeper will be here on the Island before the meeting in October! Dean Naujoks, our Potomac Riverkeeper will be giving a presentation about our great river on October 12. Come early and have a burger, I plan to start the grill and I'll be serving burgers and dogs starting at 6:00 p.m.!

JOE HAGE  
Caretaker

### Large Parties Scheduled



Sunday, October 23  
Meghan Mullen, birthday party  
noon–4 p.m.

# The Sycamore Islander

6613 80th Place  
Cabin John, MD 20818

ADDRESS SERVICES REQUESTED

## FIRST CLASS MAIL



To volunteer as a substitute caretaker, email your choice of day and shift to Madeleine Carter at [madeleinecpcarter@gmail.com](mailto:madeleinecpcarter@gmail.com).

Saturday Relief Caretakers <b>October/November 2016</b>					
OCTOBER	10 A.M.–2 P.M	2 P.M.–DUSK	NOVEMBER	10 A.M.–2 P.M.	2 P.M.–DUSK
OCTOBER 1	Kevin Haley	Eric Aaserud	NOVEMBER 5	Please Volunteer	Please Volunteer
OCTOBER 8	Lauren Brandt	Topaz Terry	NOVEMBER 12	Please Volunteer	Please Volunteer
OCTOBER 15	Jared Farber	Patricia Benton	NOVEMBER 19	Please Volunteer	Please Volunteer
OCTOBER 22	Eric Aaserud	Penny Mitchell	NOVEMBER 26	Please Volunteer	Please Volunteer
OCTOBER 29	Christy & Garth Ross	Please Volunteer			

*The Sycamore Islander* is the monthly newsletter of the Montgomery Sycamore Island Club. Every attempt is made to publish the *Islander* before the second Wednesday of the month and in advance of the monthly meeting. Articles, photographic essays, drawings, announcements, letters to the editors—any materials of interest to the membership and waiting list—are welcome. Text and graphics may be sent as email attachments to: Carol Beehler, [cbeehler@comcast.net](mailto:cbeehler@comcast.net). The deadline for inclusion in the November issue is October 28.