

The Sycamore Islander

NOVEMBER 2016 | VOLUME 95 NUMBER 11



Minutes for the October 12th Meeting

The Potomac Riverkeeper, Dean Naujoks, presented a riveting discussion of how the riverkeepers work to safeguard our rivers from polluters, and described some successes and many challenges they face before the meeting began.

Tryon Wells then called the meeting to order.

Attendees: Pat Barry, Margaret Barry, Gerry Barton, John Noble, Sherry Fizdale, Tryon Wells, Bob Shanks, Kathy Carroll, Marianne Ross, Diane Noble, Clayton Teague, Ellen Teague, Ned Goddard, Jim Drew, John Beck, Richard Bertaut, John Cunningham, and Ann Marie Cunningham.

Membership Report: John Noble nominated John Lord for membership. He was sponsored by Gordon Phillips, and recommended by Drew Walsh and Gerry Barton. John is a single father, an outdoorsman, a fly fisherman, a former Peace Corpsman, and a frequent substitute caretaker. He now works for the Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies. Welcome to the club!

Next month, John Noble will nominate Benjamin Robinson and Debra Rosenbluth to fill the only vacancy, if their application and recommendations are in order.

John is looking to streamline the process of admitting new members next year by contacting potential members and reminding them of the requirement of two letters of recommendation. Applicants who are high on the waiting list should be sure to attend a club orientation and to consider becoming involved in club activities now so that they will know members who can write recommendations for them. Volunteering to be a relief caretaker, helping during the workfests, and participating in club meetings are excellent activities to be involved in.

Treasurer's Report: Ned Goddard will present next year's budget at the November meeting. He is looking for input from members as to improvements or suggestions for the Island. He pointed out the two land patents that are now framed and hanging on the wall in the clubhouse as an idea that had been suggested by Karen Possner. Send your ideas to MSICTreasurer@yahoo.com.

Ned did say that it is likely that there will be a recommendation for a dues increase for 2017. Our annual expenses are generally creeping up a small amount each year and there have been several large and unbudgeted

expenses this year, such as filling in the old well, and a major increase (two-thirds more) in the cost of flood insurance.

Caretaker's Report: Joe Hage said that he will finish painting the outside of the caretaker's living room and therefore the entire exterior of the clubhouse this week. This includes repairing and/or replacing rotting wood in places and caulking. Ned commended Joe on the wonderful job he has done in painting the clubhouse – a round of applause from the assembled members reinforced the appreciation of the entire club for the great work done by the caretaker.

The Fall Workfest will be held on November 13, with a rain date of November 20. Volunteers are needed to rake, help with small carpentry projects, and trail maintenance on the path up the hill. There's always a great pot luck lunch in the early afternoon. Come for as much of the day as you can. If you'd like to help, but can't be there, email Joe Hage <joehage@verizon.net> and ask for suggestions about what you could do.

Gerry Barton cleaned the chimney of the wood stove, which led to a suggestion that the wood stove be replaced with a safer, more energy efficient model, or possibly a pellet stove.

Gerry also said that the rope swing has been tied back to prevent folks from using it because it is showing considerable fraying.

Clayton Teague, a new member who was attending his first meeting, discussed the lighting along the path and what is needed to fix it, and offered to work with Richard Bertaut to repair it.

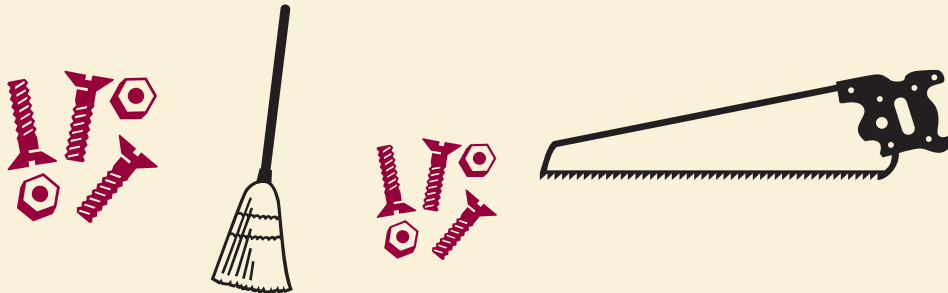
Relief Caretaker Scheduler's Report: Madeleine Carter expressed, by email, her gratitude to the relief caretakers who served us so well in the last month. They are Meredith Griggs, Madeleine Carter, Barbara Fisher, Miguel Browne, Silvija Strikis, John Lord and his son (our newest members did it twice!), Geoffrey and Tanya Cook, Chris Maggio, and Lisa Karlin. Thank you!

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned after just one hour! The next meeting will be held at 8:00 on November 9, on the Island. Please be there!

Respectfully submitted,
ANN MARIE CUNNINGHAM
Co-Recording Secretary

PLEASE JOIN US
for the
SYCAMORE ISLAND

FALL WORKFEST



Bring your rakes, drill, hammers,
and side dishes for a day of Island
maintenance and beautification

Sunday, November 13
9:00 a.m.–3 p.m.

Summary of Proposed Rules and Bylaws Changes

Since June, members of the Personnel Committee and other interested members have been meeting to clarify roles and responsibilities for some of the officers, the Personnel Committee, and the caretaker. This review of the Bylaws and Standing Rules has led to a number of proposed revisions to those documents which will be voted upon at the November meeting. This is a regular, more or less biennial endeavor, and has been an open process with the involvement and agreement of those who would be affected by the changes.

Characteristics of the changes are to:

- Remove rules that are obsolete or no longer relevant, and document the current practices.
- Clarify rules that were vague or open to interpretation.
- Better scope the responsibilities of club officers, recognizing that they are volunteers.
- Clarify that the caretaker, as a full time employee, is available to devote the majority of his time to the Island, and can act with little supervision in routine matters
- Better define the authorities for various levels of funds expended
- Enable members to become aware of rules, and to specify the authority for educating the members.

A summary of the changes to the Bylaws:

- Section 4. Standing Committees—The only changes are to include the captain as a member of the Safety Committee, and to specify that the President is the Chair of the Personnel Committee.

A summary of the changes to the Standing Rules by section:

- 3. Clubhouse Rules—Identifies the caretaker's apartment as private and restricts entry.
- 4. Camping Rules—Provides criteria for approval of camping requests, and guidance as to which Large Party rules are applicable to camping.
- 11. Caretaker's Duties and Ferry Service—Specifies that the duties are described in the contract, and qualifies the hours that ferry service is provided to say that it is not provided during periods of high water.
- 16A. President—Specifies a dollar threshold when

the president and treasurer must jointly sign contracts, removes the secretary as a signatory, names the president as responsible for enforcement of the rules, and responsible for resolving conflicts between members, officers and/or the caretaker.

- 16D. Financial Secretary—Specifies that the financial secretary cooperate with the treasurer and finance supervisor.
- 16F. Treasurer—Removes the obsolete section about the \$200 advance, specifies which contracts the treasurer must sign jointly with the president, specifies a dollar threshold when the president and treasurer must jointly sign contracts and that the treasurer can individually sign contracts for budgeted amounts of less than the threshold, and to cooperate with the Finance Secretary and Financial Supervisor.
- 16I. Captain—Clarify that the captain is in charge of the physical facilities and their maintenance, advises and supports the caretaker, coordinates the activities of several supervisors, prepares a budget for maintenance, and provides input about the caretaker's performance for the Personnel Committee.
- 17C. Personnel Committee—Specifies that the committee conduct an annual review, determine a compensation package, submit it for approval at the November meeting, inform the caretaker of the results, has the authority to suspend an employee, and has the authority to hire and discharge employees with the approval of the members at a monthly meeting.

The existing paragraphs, along with the exact wording of the changes, will be sent to members via email for review.

Sad News

Our very own Peggy Thomson (age 93) died peacefully early Thursday morning, October 20, 2016, at Mary's Meadow in Holyoke, Massachusetts.

A successful mother to her three children, Chris, Hillary and David; she was simultaneously a successful writer of countless articles for *Life* magazine, *The Progressive*, *The Washington Post*, *Washingtonian*, and others. Not to mention author of several books for young adults.

She was also the wife of John Thomson, arguably the most enthusiastic canoeist the Sycamore Island Club



JOE HAGE

has ever seen. Peggy and John joined in 1961. At the time, John was a political analyst at the CIA and became a daily member of the “canoe pool” between Sycamore Island and the Virginia shore. In those years the Thomson household was legendary among friends (and sometimes strangers) for their generosity and interesting dinner conversations.

For much more, please read Peggy’s obituary in the November 4, 2016 edition of *The Washington Post*.

TRYON WELLS

Notes from the Island

Tuesday, October 11, 2016

Water Level at Little Falls: 3.0 Water Temperature: 62

I can’t believe how quickly it has changed from summer to fall. One minute we’re frolicking in the warm water and the next we’re thinking about turning on the heat in the house. I guess the swimming is over now, at least for most of us. There are those that relish the cold water and like to test their mettle until late in the season. Those are the folks that grew up in New England or Canada. Not me.

The fishing is also drawing to a close but someone did catch a catfish from the captain’s float on Sunday.

But the canoeing is still good! Especially now that the wind has died down, Sunday and Monday were tough, windy days on the ferry and it was actually too windy to take a boat out. It's not often that we get whitecaps on the river.

I bought 22 burgers and 16 hotdogs so be sure to make to the Island tomorrow at 6:00 p.m. for food and Potomac Riverkeeper! I'll light the tiki torches and turn on the fairy lights.

Thursday, October 13, 2016

Water Level at Little Falls: 3.39 Water Temperature: 61
The river is going up a little bit, not sure why.

We had a great time last night before the club meeting. There were about 18 of us here for the pre-meeting BBQ. It was funny, with all of the space we have on the Island everyone chose to eat huddled together by the grill. After dinner we heard a very informative presentation by Potomac Riverkeeper Dean Naujoks. Coincidentally, it had been exactly one year to the day since I met Dean during his Cumberland to Point Lookout paddle trip.

Then the most miraculous thing happened, we had the meeting and it was over in less than an hour! I'm pretty sure that that has never happened before. John Noble was very impressed.

Yesterday was Yom Kippur of course and it was so cool that we had member's family and their guests breaking their fast out on the captain's float at sunset.

I have to give a shout out to Gerry Barton. Once again he took it upon himself to clean out the chimney

for the wood stove. He is turning into a real chimney sweep. Gerry also brought down his magic cleaning cream, "Bartender's Friend" and removed the rust stain from the kitchen counter in the clubhouse. Thanks Ger.

Tuesday, October 18, 2016

Water Level at Little Falls: 3.0 Water Temperature: 68
Today I cut the grass, saw a garter snake, and then I went for a swim. Not an unusual day on the Island, except for the fact that it is October 18th! Swimming in the river in October is rare but this is for sure the latest that I've ever been in the water. It is such a fine time of year for swimming too. The water is super clear and the fall colors reflecting off of the mirror-like water are a real treat.

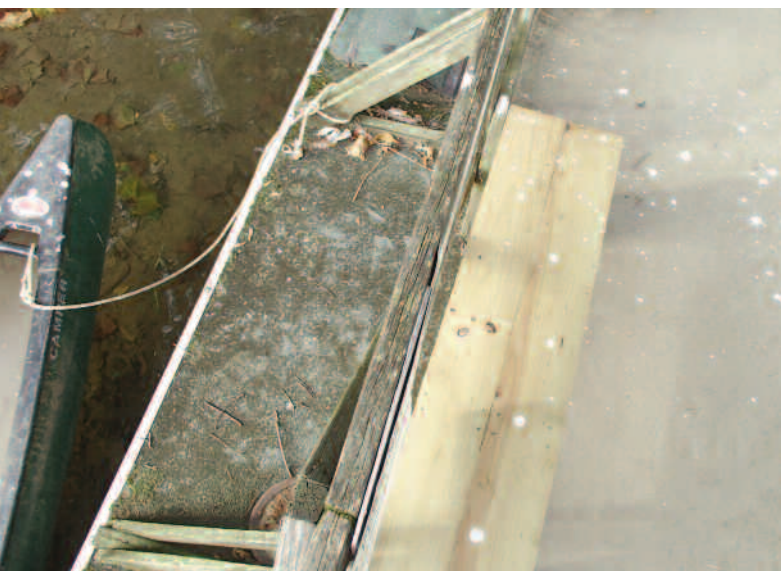
Tuesday, October 25, 2016

Water Level at Little Falls: 2.8 Water Temperature: 58
No more swimming for me, the river is a cold 58 degrees now, brrr.

It's camping season! We had 15 cub scouts here on last Saturday night and there is another group planning to camp here on this coming Saturday. It's a bit chilly, but the Island is so pretty in its cloak of Fall colors.

I had a cat on the Island for most of the month, I was cat-sitting for my kid. I was surprised at how much I enjoyed having the little bugger around and some of the members were thrilled to see a cat on the Island again, just like the old days when Peter Jones had a black cat here, I think his name was Fred. The cat has gone back to his mommy, but he did earn his keep while he was here. He caught two mice. So proud of our little mouser.

I just learned of the sad news that Peggy Thomson passed away last Thursday. She was a long-time club member and the wife of legendary club member, John Thomson. I never met John, but I have fond memories of Peggy. It was so much fun for my kids and me to visit her at her home near Chevy Chase Circle. She had a big house and she was so nice and let my young girls explore her wondrous attic that was filled with toys and items from all over the world. The other memory that sticks out in my mind is the time that Peggy came down to the Island with her daughter Hillary, and Hilly's goat! So peculiar, but like Hilly said, no rules against having a goat on the Island. We wish Hillary and her brother Dave all the best.



Bird poop on the ferry

JOE HAGE



BRUCE BEEHLER

White-breasted Nuthatch

Monday, October 31, 2016

Water Level at Little Falls: 2.7 Water Temperature: 58

Happy Halloween!!

The weather is still awesome and the Island is still lively! What a great weekend we had. The fish were still biting and some people even went swimming, and it's almost November!

The river is super clear too and I can see the bottom of the river in 15 feet. I had the rare pleasure of watching two catfish and a 12-inch bass swimming right under the captain's float. It's like being at the National Aquarium down here.

Can a bird deliberately poop on you from above? And if so why would a bird deliberately poop on you? These were the questions that were going through my head yesterday after I was very nearly creamed by a great blue heron while I was pulling the ferry back to the Island. It was just before dark when I noticed a large bird flying down the channel above me. I was watching it closely as it flew over to see if it might be a night heron. The dark shape of the bird was silhouetted against the light sky and just as it got overhead I

noticed a whole bunch of stuff flying out from between it's legs. Luckily my survival instincts kicked in and I dove for the opposite side of the ferry. It was a good thing too because after it was over the ferry looked like someone had spilled white paint all over it, right where I had been standing! Maybe that bird was mad at me for scaring it away from its fishing spots all these years. I'm gonna have to start watching by back.

JOE HAGE
Caretaker

Large Parties Scheduled



Sunday, November 13
Eric Simpson, 30 guests
10 a.m.-2 p.m.

The Sycamore Islander

6613 80th Place
Cabin John, MD 20818

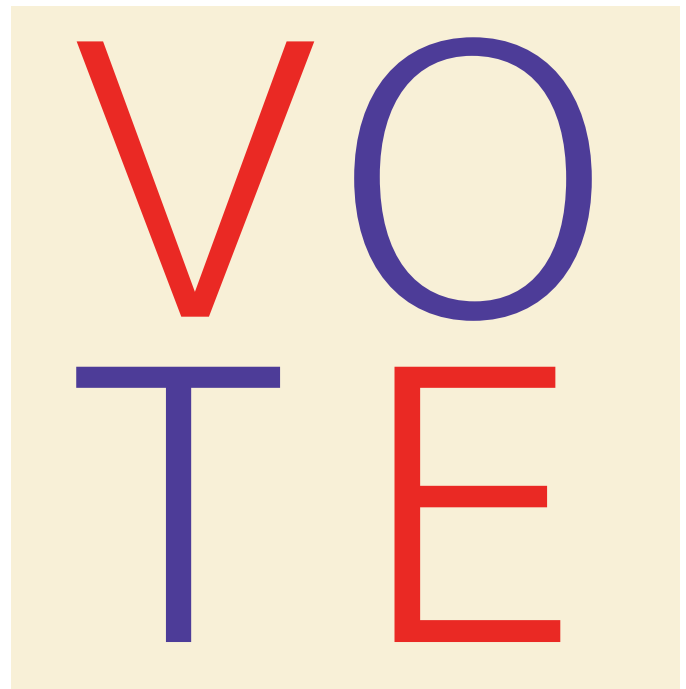
ADDRESS SERVICES REQUESTED

FIRST CLASS MAIL



To volunteer as a substitute caretaker, email your choice of day and shift to Madeleine Carter at madeleinecpcarter@gmail.com.

Saturday Relief Caretakers November 2016		
NOVEMBER	10 A.M.–2 P.M.	2 P.M.–DUSK
NOVEMBER 5	Greg Hitz	Meghan Mullan
NOVEMBER 12	John Beck	Meghan Mullan
NOVEMBER 19	Please Volunteer	Please Volunteer
NOVEMBER 26	Eric Simpson	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 in advance of the monthly meeting. Articles, photographs, drawings—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. The deadline for inclusion in the December issue is December 2.