

Minutes

March 4, 2023 9:00 AM
Online via Videoconference

Meeting called to order at 9:03am

1. Introduction and greetings – Robert Simmons

2. Attendance

Officers: R. Simmons, T. Engel, B. Folsom

Trustees: D. Hedges, R. Armen, M. Ingalls, K. Dumont, J. Morris-Siegel, R. Drake, P. Rubin, L. Hatfield, L. Davis

3. Absent: M. Berger

4. Officers' Reports

President: Attachment A

Vice President: Attachment B

Treasurer: Attachment C

Secretary: Attachment D

5. Simmons moves to open the Committee of the Whole (CotW). The Vice President will preside. Items may be entered as new business.

Second by Ingalls

For: Rest

Abstain: Hedges, Engel

[The Committee of the Whole is opened]

Topics:

5.1. Preserve-specific logos (Engel)

[Engel was contacted by a teacher at a middle school / high school in Berlin wanting to take her students on a cave trip and engage them in designing a logo for their local cave. He noted that the idea of a logo for each preserve might mesh well with discussions we've had about producing more designs for NCC "swag" and felt it was worth discussing here.]

Engel was contacted by a middle school, which proposed doing a logo for Bentleys Cavern. Davis is very much in favor due to the involvement of local school kids and feels it would help build enthusiasm for the caves. Hatfield asks if we should also extend it to other schools near our caves. Engel feels like we maybe shouldn't solicit it, but if we have someone who is interested in doing it, we should work with them, and it is a good opportunity. Hatfield expresses that she felt it would be appropriate to reach out to schools for other preserves, at least to gauge enthusiasm, rather than waiting for them to reach out themselves. Simmons thinks it is a good idea, and there is general agreement that we should work with them and see where we want to go from there.

5.2. Executive succession planning (Dumont, Simmons)

[This is our periodic check-in point to discuss how the effort is going, what we're doing, etc.]

Dumont spoke with Ray Knott on January 30th. Knott suggested a one-day intensive as opposed to a multi-day retreat. If we pay for his expenses and donate \$240/day to SCCi, no other fee would be needed. Knott would also like us to give him a LinkedIn recommendation if we are happy with his work. Dumont is looking to brainstorm goals for the meeting and topics for discussion, and requests we send him an email with ideas for agenda items. Folsom asks why Knott is the right person to run this; Dumont states that Berger would likely have more information but Dumont doesn't have specific points to recommend him personally. Davis requests that we ask Knott for a package about his credentials and background in this area before making a decision. Hatfield looks up his LinkedIn profile and lists his credentials, and Drake reports that he is a well-respected paid employee at SCCi.

Dumont asks who are the right people to attend the meeting. Folsom expresses he thinks it should just be the Board and Trustees, and Hatfield expresses concern that if we bring in too many people with different goals, then we might not get anything done due to lack of focus. Davis requests that we ask Knott who should attend, but agrees with Folsom that it should probably just be Board members, though a survey of members to request input may be appropriate. Simmons agrees, especially if it is a one-day event. Folsom seconds the idea of soliciting input from other members beforehand, but not bringing them to the meeting itself. There is general support for this path forward. Engel expresses that we may want to also invite N. Berg to represent the Nominating Committee, since it will heavily affect that committee. Folsom asks if it is clear that the goal is figuring out a succession process; Dumont reports that he made that clear to Knott that it is the short-term problem we are facing, but also feels that we

should take the opportunity to develop a long-term strategy for the organization.

Dumont requests that we get topics and goals to him by next weekend, and will send out an email to the Board requesting that information. Folsom and Dumont remind us that all of the planning will need to take place prior to the next Board meeting, and adds a motion to the agenda to fund this initiative (Item 9). Folsom reminds us that we put \$5,000 in the budget for development, so it is not a budgetary problem.

Folsom asks that we decide on a date, or set of possible dates. Dumont requests that we make it an in-person required event; Davis and Folsom agree. Several locations were suggested; Engel suggests that we should pick a place near an airport - Hartford may be easiest to fly into. Simmons notes that the Brauer Field Station is unavailable in 2023. Dumont will send an email requesting date availability. *[Editor's note: Morris-Siegel sent out a Doodle poll shortly afterwards.]*

5.3. Communications (Hatfield)

Hatfield raises the concern that we don't communicate with the membership well, and the membership may not know about events that the NCC is running, such as how and when to attend NCC meetings. Dumont reminds us that there is a Communications Ad-hoc Committee to discuss these issues. Folsom suggests that we post information that we are having a meeting on Facebook (but not the actual Zoom link), but agrees that we don't communicate well with our membership. Hatfield suggests looking to SCCi for inspiration, and Dumont appoints Hatfield to the Communications Ad-hoc Committee. Dumont also suggests we add the topic to the potential retreat agenda items.

5.4. Knox Access Trail and Fundraising (Hatfield)

Hatfield is looking for any donors from whom we could request donations for the Knox trail project. The grant application is due on 3/16, and more matching donations before that point will reflect well on the application.

6. Simmons moves to close the Committee of the Whole.

Second by Engel

For: All

[The Committee of the Whole is closed]

Old Business

[None]

New Business

7. Engel moves: The minutes of the December 4, 2022 Board Meeting are approved.

[The Secretary would like to thank Dumont, Hatfield, and Folsom for sending in their reviews.]

Second by Dumont

For: Rest

Abstain: Armen, Morris-Siegel

[The minutes of the December 4, 2022 Board Meeting are approved]

8. Simmons moves: The President is authorized to submit a renewal application for the Volunteer Stewardship Agreement with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation for ongoing management and stewardship of Surprise Cave located in the Bashakill Wildlife Management Area in the Town of Mamakating, Sullivan County, NY.

Second by Rubin

Engel asks whether this is something that needs to be approved. Simmons expresses that it is an agreement with another organization and so should be agreed upon by the Board. [REDACTED]

For: All

[The President is authorized to submit a renewal application for the NCC's VSA with NYSDEC for Surprise Cave]

9. Simmons moves: The NCC shall reimburse the travel expenses and make a donation to SCCi of \$240/day for Ray Knott for the Board Development Meeting.

[This was discussed during Item 5.2 in Committee of the Whole.]

Second by Hedges

For: All

[The NCC will reimburse Ray Knott's travel expenses and donate \$240/day to SCCi for our Board Development Meeting]

10. Folsom moves: The NCC shall enter into an agreement with AYZ Financial Services to use QuickBooks Online. The invoice for this agreement for the remainder of 2023 is \$489 (pro-rated from the 1/28/23 start date).

Second by Davis

For: All

[The NCC will enter into an agreement with AYZ Financial Services to use QuickBooks Online, and pay \$489 for the remainder of this year]

Informational point: J. Dunham informs the Board that if it would like information to go into the next Northeastern Caver about the NCC seeking Officers or Trustees, we should send that content today, as they are currently compiling the upcoming issue. Simmons agrees to send them that information today.

Informational point: Next EC meeting will be Saturday, May 6, 2023 at 10AM at a location to be determined or 9AM if entirely via videoconference. [Folsom notes that this date is one of the possible dates for the Board Development session with Ray Knott, and may require adjustment.]

Informational point: The Summer Board meeting will be Saturday, June 3, 2023 at 10AM at the Chu residence or 9AM if entirely via videoconference.

Informational point: The late Summer EC meeting will be Sunday, August 20, 2023 at 10AM at a location to be determined or 9AM if entirely via videoconference.

11. Simmons moves: The NCC Fall meeting will be Saturday, September 23, 2023 at 10AM at the Knox Octagon Barn or 9AM if entirely via videoconference.

Second by Folsom

For: Rest

Abstain: Davis, Ingalls

[The NCC Fall meeting will be Saturday, September 23, 2023 at 10AM at the Knox Octagon Barn or 9AM if entirely via videoconference]

12. Simmons moves: The NCC thanks Kevin Dumont for arranging in-person hosting for this meeting, despite the weather changing our plans to a virtual meeting. Dumont also notes that thanks are due to Slices of Saugerties, which had volunteered to provide the luncheon for the in-person meeting.

Second by Folsom

For: Rest

Abstain: Dumont

[Kevin Dumont and Slices of Saugerties have the NCC's gratitude for their attempted hospitality for this meeting]

13. Simmons moves: The Board shall enter Executive Session to discuss acquisitions.

Second by Hedges

For: All

[The Board enters Executive Session at 10:51am and exits Executive Session at 11:13am]

14. Engel moves to adjourn.

Second by Ingalls

For: Rest

Abstain: Armen, Morris-Siegel

[The meeting is adjourned]

Meeting adjourned at 11:15am

**Attachment A
President's Report**

General

1. All may have noticed that I have been somewhat off the grid for the last month or so. Part of that was deliberate as I spent two weeks almost entirely sans media in Hawaii the end of January and first half of February. Since returning, I've been absolutely plastered at work and not feeling well to boot. I apologize if I have not been communicative or timely in my responses to everyone.
2. We are making some headway on the planning retreat. Kevin will be requesting input for specific topics that should get covered. We still need a location and if people have ideas, please bring them up.
3. Still no candidates for taking over the President's and Secretary's positions come December. I will do an appeal to the membership to see what we can drum up.
4. I have written and sent in the close out reports to LTA for the two grants we had outstanding (Salamander and Clarksville), so those are done.
5. The two promising acquisitions have stalled somewhat. The [REDACTED] property owner thinks he is sitting on a gold mine (well [REDACTED] to be exact) and that his land is worth significant dollars. He also thinks that the State of New York is interested in or may be interested in acquiring acreage in his area, so this has stalled for now from our perspective. The potential acquisition in [REDACTED] has also stalled temporarily. The owners counter offered our initial offer with a price more than twice the amount I was authorized to offer. I informed them that such a price was way above what we could/would pay and countered with the maximum that I was authorized to make. They are considering that offer.
6. I have received feedback on our first proposed Conservation Easement for the site in [REDACTED]. I am addressing those and planning to resubmit a revised draft. The second easement discussions have not started as of this writing.
7. The [REDACTED] cave property in [REDACTED] is no longer listed for sale with the realty firm that had the listing. I intend to reach out directly to the owners to see if there is some sort of deal we could reach. In my last conversation with the realtor, he had indicated that if the property did not sell, they would likely [REDACTED]. The [REDACTED] may be another avenue towards gaining access/easement/sale of the subsurface.
8. I have received an inquiry from someone interested in taking on the Membership Chair position. We weren't able to discuss at length but will be doing a call soon. If possible, it will be great to have Leslie on the call as she has the most recent and detailed experience with the position.
9. I have been talking with Kingston Land Trust about ways for them to be able to construct their trails system and parking area. The grant funding they have is very much short of the totals they need based on actual construction bids. They were very interested in ideas for securing additional funding, grants, etc. I indicated our position from last fall, that NCC could assist with labor, but unlikely that we would have funding available to provide.
10. With Board authorization, I intend to resubmit our Volunteer Stewardship Agreement with the NYS DEC for Surprise Cave. I have discussed this with the DEC Representative, and he is on board with our renewal. On a related note, I have continued the dialogue with the cave owners and personally went down and put a new lock on the old gate in January. I would like to have someone more local to the cave take the lead on gate inspections, lock replacements, etc.
11. I received an email from a [REDACTED] conservation organization concerning a possible karst area (and conservation thereof) in [REDACTED]. We have yet to meet the owner and walk the site, but I have researched the area using lidar and despite the geology having been mapped as quartzite and not marble, there are several areas where there are distinct groupings of textbook sinkholes. A new karst area in [REDACTED]? Looks that way. More to follow as the owner is looking at conservation options.
12. I currently intend to attend the Connecticut Land Conservation Council conference on March 25, 2023 in Middletown, CT as well as the New York Land Conservation conference May 10 & 11 in Saratoga Springs, NY.
13. Members appreciation day has been scheduled for July 15, 2023 to be held concurrently with the opening ceremony for the new Gage cabin. There will be events and caving all weekend and it looks like we will have a number of NSS officials present with whom we can interact. Please save the date and plan to attend if possible.
14. I contacted the owner of Jack Packers cave after the last meeting and informed him that we would renew our lease for the next year. He was in agreement on the renewal. I still need to deliver the \$1.00 lease amount. If time permits, I will try and stop by the preserve on the way home from the Board meeting.

Management Plan Reviews and Schedule

The Spider MP is up for review. The management team is not proposing any changes to the existing MP at this time. The plan review schedule as presently laid out is provided in the table below.

Year	March	June	September	December
2023	Spider	Clarksville	Salamander	Bentleys

2024	Ella Armstrong	Knox	Traino	Sellecks
2025	Bensons	Merlins	Jack Packers	Onesquethaw

Cave Preserve Reports

Alan Traino (Devon Hedges)

Problems - none of note

Progress - none of note

Plans - securing contractor commitments for excavation & stone delivery are priorities before June, ideally as soon as ground can be worked.

Bensons (Luke Mazza)

No report received.

Bentleys (Devon Hedges, Jonah Spivak)

Problems - none of note

Progress - none of note

Plans - DEC bat survey to be conducted 3/7/23; shopping and delivery of gravel should happen this year.

Clarksville (Thom Engel, Mike Chu, Chuck Porter)

Progress: The DEC restricted area signs are up at the changing area, the kiosk, and all three entrances.

DEC did a bat count in the cave on 2/17. They found three bats.

Issues: There is continued and considerable visitation to the cave despite the cave closed signs and the DEC signs

Plans: I plan to remove the restricted area signs on May 1. The preserve managers have scheduled a preserve clean-up including in-cave graffiti removal for May 20, 2023 at 10AM. Those wishing to come before 10 are welcome.

Ella Armstrong (Erik Nieman)

Progress: Half of parking area has been cleared of overgrowth. Sign-in register installed at kiosk.

Issues: Overgrowth in parking area

Plans: ongoing project to clear weeds overtaking the parking area

Jack Packers (Kevin Dumont)

Progress: Morris-Siegel, Ingalls, and Dumont report that the bat count was as follows: [REDACTED]. Dumont has let the landowner know; they are on-board with not going into the cave during the winter.

Issues: None to report

Plans: Dumont will update the Management Plan and get it to Morris-Siegel for review and a vote for next meeting. Per Ingalls, it should not list specific numbers to avoid needing to be updated constantly, but should mention that there are bats. The cave will be closed during the winter until May 1st. Engel notes that the MP should not mention whether there are endangered or threatened species. A kiosk similar to the one present at Onesquethaw will be installed close to the trailhead, to be constructed either in the spring or summer of 2023. Continued improvement of the trail will take place during the same timeframe. The owner has also expressed desire for informational displays at the kiosk and/or along the trail, which will be investigated and tentatively installed in 2023. A resurvey of the cave is in process, to be completed by mid-2023. Morris-Siegel will work with Dumont and Armen to get the webpage up by May 1 to push for visitation this Spring/Summer.

Knox (Mitch Berger)

Progress: The “Fat Bat” research project equipment was removed sometime after the last report. We received a proposal and estimate for the sinkhole trail restoration project from Tahawus Trails, which includes an option for us to be trained and provide volunteer labor for a substantial portion of the project, which would markedly decrease its cost. Even so, it is an expensive project which we and Tahawus hope to execute on next year. In the meantime, Hatfield has been putting in significant effort to apply for grants to fund this project, and has also obtained a number of pledges of matching funds from Board and other members. Berger has provided some information to support these applications. Had initial discussions with Caving Academy instructing staff about possible use of the

cave for the upcoming June rescue class. One Crossbones permit was issued, but the group found water entering the cave and aborted their trip early.

Issues: E. Davis made an attempt to inquire of our neighbor whether the deer stand spotted by Simmons at the back of the property belonged to him, but has not yet been able to connect; we'll need to check whether it's still there and see if we can identify its origin. We still haven't obtained a grant for the sinkhole trail restoration project. The Great Divide rope is still there. Engel and Berger need to investigate poison parsnip plants present on the preserve. Most of the "No Hunting" signs still need replacement. Had to deny one permit for someone asking to visit Knox in March.

Plans: Periodic property inspections. Keep tabs on the status of the surrounding land. Assist Hatfield with fundraising efforts for the trail restoration project. Addition of trail markers and reposting of the property. Boundary marking. Removal of the Great Divide rope. Investigation of troublesome plant species. Further attempts at removal of graffiti. Replace "No Hunting" signs.

Merlins (Morgan Ingalls, Ramon Armen)

No report received.

Onesquethaw (Thom Engel, Christa Hay)

Progress: The DEC restricted area signs are up .

Issues: Nothing to report

Plans: I plan to put up additional signage to discourage cavers from going on our neighbor's property before May 1.

Salamander (Cara Gentry)

I've been working on the website info, waiting on some language from the Connors family. I also reached out to a local historian to see if they had anything new. They have been unearthing a lot of local history that was thought lost.

I'll see what I can do to get out to the preserve asap. I've been building the report template in Landscape to give you all an idea of what the program can do

Sellecks (Erik Nieman, Tony Vasile)

Progress: Old kiosk has been removed. New sign-in cabinet installed.

Issues: New informational poster needed. New display cabinet needed.

Plans: Design and print new poster. Build and install new display cabinet.

Spider (Adriane Hectus)

Progress: The preserve was most recently visited on February 15, 2023 by Adriane Hectus. No issues/changes to report.

Issues: During the July visit it was discovered that a hunting stand and trail camera had been installed at the top of the escarpment. The equipment is situated on NCC property. On November 14, 2022 Adriane spoke with previous landowner, Midge Carl, who also owns the surrounding parcels of land. She has given permission for a neighbor to hunt in the wooded area of her property. As the hunting stand is just on the NCC side of the property line and faces her property, there are no concerns of encroachment and it is believed there is no further action required in this matter. Email has been sent to Jacob Morris-Siegel and Mitch Berger to close the Terrafirma placeholder claim.

Plans: Trash/debris collection along Route 146 and replacement of missing/fallen boundary markers hold priority for spring 2023.

Other Committees under the President

Acquisitions (Chuck Porter, Bob Simmons)

The realtor that had the [REDACTED] property listing is no longer advertising the property on their web site (presumably, the listing period expired). I had asked him to see if the owners would consider a parcellation so we might obtain the cave entrances/sinks and a little interconnecting land. I never heard anything back on this from him, so I will now contact the [REDACTED] directly and see if there may be a position for us somewhere.

I have not heard anything new from the [REDACTED] on [REDACTED]. I will contact them this week and possibly have an update prior to the Board meeting.

Nothing new, other than remaining friendly with the owners of [REDACTED]. Thom is going to reach out and assist them as possible with educational issues.

The conservation easement process for the [REDACTED] in [REDACTED] continues to move ahead. I have received comments on the draft easement and continue cordial relations with the owners who are very much in favor of our easement. Hoping to have a negotiated final product before the June meeting in 2023 for Board approval.

We have not yet had substantive talks with the owners of the other property in [REDACTED], waiting to get this one completed before starting in on that one.

Nothing new with [REDACTED], just continuing friendly conversations, mostly about their upcoming barn project.

Chuck has made contact with the owner of [REDACTED]. Apparently he thinks he is sitting on a very valuable piece of land that has [REDACTED] on it and that there is significant interest by the State of New York in acquiring the mountainside (a.k.a. [REDACTED]). Prospects do not seem to be likely at this point, but we will continue to engage to see if it can go anywhere.

I made our offer of [REDACTED] to the owner's representative for [REDACTED]. After a period of time, I contacted them and was told they were looking for significantly more money for the piece than our offer. I asked for a counter offer, reiterating the values I had discussed at the outset and how I believed the property was likely not developable, for a number of considerations. They counter-offered with [REDACTED]. I replied that we could not, under non-profit law, offer more than fair market value and if the property is not developable, then our offer is reasonable. I indicated that we could go up to [REDACTED] and that while I would take their offer to the Board, it would not be accepted for the reasons stated. The ball is back in their court at this point.

I have continued a dialogue with the owners of [REDACTED] and will be sitting down with them later this Spring to see if we can work something out with respect to their lands and the majority of the cave which lies underneath. I had also reported the lack of a lock on the cave gate and contacted [REDACTED] about that. I offered to put a lock on the cave (which I did with [REDACTED] permission and thanks) in January. While at the site, I noticed that the cave entrance on the owner's property was larger than my last visit and that some of the stream flow was now entering the entrance. I reported this to the owner, and the fact that there is a potential entrance into the cave on his property is one of the reasons he is even more motivated to get the NCC involved with the cave.

I was contacted recently by staff at the [REDACTED] whom I had met at one of the regional land trust events (it's all about the networking). She had been contacted by a [REDACTED] landowner seeking conservation options for his property in [REDACTED]. She had walked the property with him and saw a number of obvious sinkholes. This is an area where karst was not suspected based on the mapped geology (quartzite, not marble). I looked into the area using the [REDACTED] Lidar resource, and there are a number of sinkhole clusters on the property. We are working out a date and time to go and walk the property, discuss the potential conservation options and see if there is likely cave present. Not sure where this will lead at this time, but finding a "new" karst area in [REDACTED] is a significant enough finding in itself.

Nominating Committee (Norm Berg)

Below is the schedule, using June 4 as the next board meeting date:

- First week in March: Begin reaching out to cavers to solicit candidates.
- May 12 (Friday): Last day to submit candidate bio/platforms. (Allows 2 days to get the ballot system ready.)
- May 13-14 (Saturday - Sunday): Ballots and bios/platforms are emailed to the membership. (Allows for 13 full days of voting.)
- May 16 (Tuesday): Post on NCC Facebook that voting is underway.
- May 27 (Saturday): Voting closes at the end of day ET.
- May 28-29 (Sunday and/or Monday): Results are provided to the NCC Board. Notify candidates of results.
- June 4 (Sunday): First Board meeting where newly elected members are seated.

FYI: Riley, Morgan and Paul's term were expire this year (2023).

Risk Management (Mitch Berger)

Progress: Participated in annual LTA risk management training. Submitted our 2023 Terrafirma application.

Issues: Still haven't identified the origin of the deer stand at Knox.

Plans: Assemble the rest of the committee membership. Pick up other issues that were in-progress with the former ad-hoc committee. Address insurance needs if any of the pending acquisition or conservation easement projects move forward.

Tory's Cave ad hoc (Bob Simmons)

Nothing new to report.

Bat Hibernation

No updates for this meeting. Bat counts have been conducted in Clarksville and Jack Packers so far this year.

Governance (Devon Hedges)

No report for this meeting.

Vermont Land Trust (Ramon Armen)

No report for this meeting.

Communications (Kevin Dumont)

Nothing new to report.

Native American Recognition (Kevin Dumont)

Nothing new to report

Officer Succession (Kevin Dumont)

Kevin spoke to [REDACTED] on the phone on January 30. He is open to coming to New York to facilitate a one-day intensive to help the NCC solve its immediate problems (officer succession) as well as help us solidify a vision for the future and beyond.

The cost to the NCC would be all of his expenses (travel, lodging, meals) and a donation to SCCi in the amount of \$240 per day of his involvement.

The date for this summit is TBD, as are the location and specific goals.

Board: please provide your specific items, issues and concerns that should be addressed in our strategic planning to Kevin. We may not be able to address them all but are looking to get as comprehensive a list of topics as we can that the Board thinks are pertinent so that we can combine topics and prioritize for the actual meeting.

**Attachment B
Vice President's Report**

Bylaws Committee (Joe Levinson)

Nothing to report

Education (Thom Engel)

Shenendehowa Science and Health Discovery Night has been scheduled for Friday, April 21, 2023. (Just a "save-the-date" contact so far.)

We have been invited to the Greater Capital Region STEAM Exposition (GCRSE) to participate in the Discovery Fair at the GCRSE on Saturday, May 20, 2023, at Colonie Central High School. We have been invited in the past but since this event has typically conflicted with NRO, we've never attended. While not required they'd like a "donation" of \$50.

Science Committee (Larry Davis & Paul Rubin)

Fat Bat Research – The fall field season wrapped up at the end of October, so no new work has been done since the last update. The spring field season will hopefully begin around March 15th, pending hiring of a new technician. The field season will run through the end of May.

Speleothem Research – On January 11, 2023, the Internal Grants section of Boston College Center for Centers completed review of an Ignite proposal submitted by Professor Jeremy Shakun and congratulated him on being chosen as an Ignite recipient. \$30,000.00 was awarded to advance the speleothem research with funding now available. Initial speleothem analyses will be conducted over the next few months. Preliminary discussion regarding paperwork needed to approve collection of several speleothem samples from Salamander Cave is underway.

Special Use (Thom Engel)

The final report for CY 2022 was completed and circulated to the board

We have 16 reservations for the 2023. I have already denied one request as they wanted to go to Clarksville in March.

Surprise Cave Committee (vacant)

Thacher Park (Thom Engel)

No one has come forth yet to volunteer to map or remap the following: Wynd Cave, Livingston Cave, Tory House, the small caves in the Becraft near Hop Field, Outlet falls cave, Yellow Rocks Cave & spring, Dynamite Hollow Cave, Forgotten Cave, Uhl Be Cold Cave, Daddy Longlegs Cave, Stal Cave, and Danny's Cave.

I will initiate renewal of the permit this next period.

Cave Protection (Thom Engel)

No action. With redistricting I will be starting over.

**Attachment C
Treasurer's Report**

*NSF Account total as of 12/30/22

2023 Budget: Approved vs Actual

	Approved	Actual
	FY23	FY23 YTD
Ordinary Income/Expense		
Income		
Donations		
Auction Donations	2,000.00	0.00
Donations - Other	19,075.00	3,323.81

Total Donations	21,075.00	3,323.81
Grants	0.00	0.00
Interest Earned	10.00	2.19
Membership Income	3,000.00	150.00
NRO Income	0.00	0.00
Total Income	\$24,085.00	\$3,476.00
Expense		
Acquisitions	2,000.00	0.00
Bank Charges	100.00	6.74
Donations-outgoing	200.00	0.00
Development	5,000.00	0.00
Dues	450.00	0.00
Education	50.00	0.00
Executive		
President	100.00	0.00
Secretary	50.00	0.00
Treasurer	50.00	0.00
VP	50.00	0.00
Total Executive	250.00	0.00
Fundraising	750.00	0.00
Grant Expense	0.00	0.00
Insurance	2,700.00	992.00
Legal Fees	1,500.00	0.00
Licenses & Permits	200.00	0.00
Meeting Expense	500.00	0.00
Meetings & Conferences	300.00	0.00
Membership Expenses	125.00	0.00
Miscellaneous	100.00	0.00
NRO expenses	0.00	0.00
Office Expense	100.00	0.00
Postage	100.00	0.00
Preserves-Administration	1,500.00	0.00
Preserves-Maintenance		
Bensons	100.00	0.00

Bentleys	200.00	0.00
Clarksville	100.00	0.00
Ella Armstrong	100.00	0.00
Jack Packers	600.00	0.00
Knox	100.00	0.00
Merlins	400.00	0.00
Onesquethaw	50.00	0.00
Salamander	600.00	0.00
Sellecks	100.00	0.00
Spider	100.00	0.00
Traino	800.00	0.00
Total Preserves-Maintenance	3,250.00	0.00
Promotion	3,000.00	0.00
Publishing		
Mailings	50.00	0.00
Website	210.00	0.00
Total Publishing	260.00	0.00
Science	500.00	0.00
Sponsorships	850.00	0.00
Taxes on Properties	300.00	40.82
Total Expense	\$24,085.00	\$1,039.56
Net Ordinary Income	0.00	\$2,436.44

Recently the NCC's desktop version of Quickbooks2007 stopped working due to an incompatibility with the current version of Windows. I have switched to Quickbooks Online via our bookkeeper's account, [REDACTED]. We will be receiving a 30% discount off the regular monthly price of \$80; we will be spending approximately \$42/month. Until now, the NCC has not had a monthly cost for bookkeeping. She has not billed us yet, but it will be for the entire year. Morris-Siegel has access to a report about software MA land trusts are using and has offered the info to Folsom, but Folsom has a strong preference to stick with QuickBooks.

The 2021 tax forms were rejected by the IRS due to not being submitted electronically. This is my fault for missing this since the IRS sent us a postcard to this effect last February notifying of this new requirement. After speaking with an IRS representative, I have uploaded them via a 3rd party service, 990.org. We will then receive an IRS notice of late submission penalty letter, which I will then dispute due to hardship. I was previously successful in fending off a penalty levied during the Pandemic for a supposed late submission. The maximum penalty will be ~\$1,300, though we will hopefully have it reduced.

Barn Dance Subcommittee - Emily Davis & Mike Warner:

Plans: Have Bill check on dates for next year. The September dates are better as the weather is often better.

Progress: An additional \$50 donation from NBT bank for the 2022 dance brings the profit to \$925.

Problems: Should we continue with the crowded venue or try and find a new one? Hate to change the location.

Fundraising Committee – Leslie Hatfield

Bank of Greene County Grant

- Submitted 1/15/23
- **Amount Requested: Total \$1278**; Jack Packers Kiosk - \$817, Project Guest Book Signage - \$461
- Should know before May

Knox Access Trail Appeal - money needed \$30K - \$40K

- Email appeals sent out to targeted group, to include EC/board - pledged \$6700 so far (including \$1000 that is conditional)

Community Impact Grant - Community Foundation for the Greater Capital Region

- Submission deadline - February 23
- Asking for \$6K for Knox Access Trail

Project Guestbook - A work in progress – need to create and stick to a timeline

12 Reasons to Join/Donate - 12 emails/posts highlighting a preserve a week.

Goal - increase membership and donations.

The Bender Family Foundation Grant - Knox Access Trail

Pre-application due in March

Membership Committee – Leslie Hatfield:

Life - 69

Family Life - 9

Regular - 80

Family Regular - 10

Benefactor - 17

Institutional - 6

Total - 191

Help with Grotto renewals: MET, NNJG, CCG

Attempting to reach out to previous institutional members for renewal – SUOC, Cornell, RPI, Camp Echo Lake

Office Committee Report - Emily Davis & Mike Warner:

Status Quo

Publications – Christa Hay:

Problems: Lack of content. The last newsletter was June 2022. The Editor and I have in communication as to what can be done. below are some thoughts:

- 1) Continue with a quarterly newsletter and hope to get submissions. In the past we at least had a preserve highlighted in each newsletter.
- 2) Reduce the number of newsletters to two issues or one annual newsletter. The annual newsletter was proposed many years ago. If we do this could include items such as Get to know a board member, committee chair or a NCC member, highlight one or two preserves. These are just some ideas.

- 3) Find or hire a newsletter editor who will actively seek out or simply write material, as needed. When Danny took the position, it was with the understanding that he would not seek out material. As we know it's been getting harder and harder to get material for many organizations.
- 4) Stop the newsletter and rely on online social media (e.g., Facebook) and email blasts to the membership.

Progress: Email blast on Seeking Candidates for Trustees will go out before the Board meeting. I was asked to wait to send it no earlier than February 21.

Publicity: Working on the orders for the approved swag, stickers, Hats, t-shirts and plastic mugs. Some concerns on the plastic mugs were voiced several months ago and more recently with the final approval email. These concerns are not just from me. In the end, will do what the Board decides.

Technology Committee Report – Mike Chu:

Website was compromised back in November.

- Temporary fix has been to turn the site from a dynamic one into a static site -- this has been done in such a way that the site appears normal to viewers, but doing site-wide updates it has become more difficult.
- Long term fix is to either restore the website or come up with a new one (move off of the relatively insecure Wordpress framework).

Volunteer Value Committee – Vince Kappler:

Progress:

NCC volunteering has almost returned to pre-pandemic averages.

VOLUNTEER VALUE STATS

	Hours	Miles	Dollar Value
2006	1389.5	20,862	\$29,955.00
2007	1571.5	14,607	\$35,542.00
2008	1680.5	14,143	\$36,926.00
2009	1440.5	10,442	\$39,564.00
2010	1234.0	10,949	\$42,211.00
2011	1546.0	14,118	\$54,684.00
2012	1483.5	13,951	\$51,605.00
2013	1916.5	20,522	\$70,268.00
2014	1481.0	18,621	\$48,757.00
2015	1634.75	15,664	\$58,450.00
2016	1563.25	12,303	\$52,341.00
2017	2106.5	10,234	\$64,058.00
2018	1533.5	13,899	\$54,393.00
2019	1480.5	13,284	\$64,394.00

2020	646	4036	\$22,415.00
2021	825.9	2097	\$25,941.00
2022	1212.75	3370	\$33,125.00
			\$784,629.00

I have been away for several weeks and neglected to send a reminder notice to volunteers to report VV time for first quarter 2023. I will request members report from January 1st when I ask for 2nd quarter stats.

Plans:

INDEPENDENT SECTOR (IS) tracks the value of volunteer time. For the latest year available, IS determined that the rate in our area averaged slightly over \$31.00 per hour. I will calculate NCC’s VV at \$29.00 per hour for 2023 just to be on the conservative side.

The IRS has increased the business mileage rate to \$.655 for 2023. Note that this is not the rate that can be deducted from your personal taxes. The NCC adopted the use of the *prevailing IRS business rate* when it modeled its VV program after the original NSS-USFS VV agreement which permitted the use of the business rate instead of the charitable donation rate.

Problems:

None currently.

**Attachment D
Secretary’s Report**

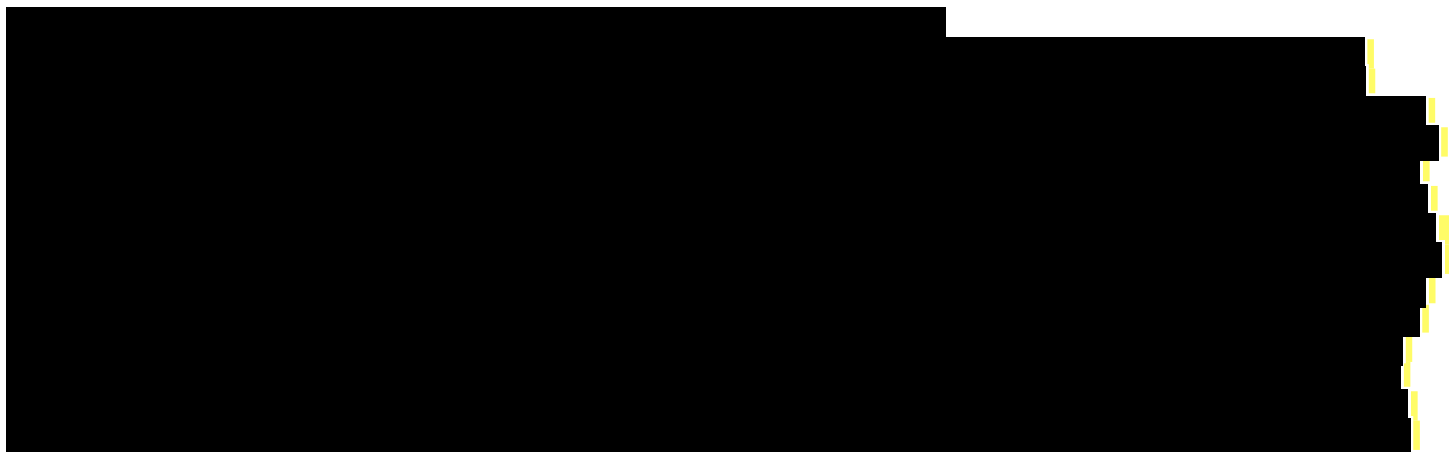
**EC Meeting Minutes
January 22, 2023, 9:00am
Online via Videoconference**

Called to order: 9:10am

Present: B. Simmons, M. Berger, B. Folsom, T. Engel, L. Hatfield, J. Morris-Siegel (for first 20 minutes)

1) LTA leadership transition series

Simmons sent the announcement of this series first to the EC, and then on to the Board, and pitched attendance to Dumont, though hasn’t yet heard back. It’s a 4-part 1-1.5 hour session series on how to approach transfers in governance. Simmons will be away for two of the sessions, and so it would be best for someone else to attend. The cost is about \$90, and there are two tracks - one for all-volunteer groups, and one for groups with paid staff.



3) Jack Packers lease renewal?

Simmons has notified [REDACTED] that we'd like to renew our lease, as the original one-year term began in March 2022. He'll need to send a \$1 check.

4) Knox sinkhole trail restoration / Tahawus Trails

Berger gives a description of the proposal he and Simmons recently received from Tahawus Trails, following their site visit late last year. Engel asks where the proposed steps would go to, and Berger responds that they'd go to roughly the same place as the rail ties run to now. Hatfield shares a comment from E. Davis that if you amortize the cost of this restoration over an expected 40-year lifespan, it's not all that expensive. She has looked at the Bender Family Foundation Grant, and asked some people whether they'd be interested in making a large donation as part of the matching funds we'd need for the grant. The grant can result in an award of up to \$15k. Thus far, she has one commitment. The deadline for pre-submission of applications is the end of March, but the decisions about winners won't be made until August. She wonders whether this may be pushing it out too late for us, but Berger shares that he, Simmons, and the Tahawus representatives who met in late 2022 all expected that we'd likely carry out the engagement in 2024, so this timing should be fine. Simmons reminds us that if we ended up doing this work as part of an LTA grant, we'd have to have a 25% match, and also that applications wouldn't go in until December of this year - with decisions not released until April. Folsom appreciates that we're not trying to squeeze this project into 2023, noting that what's left of the trail is probably not going to fall apart this year, meaning that getting our ducks in a row rather than rushing is wiser. Folsom also asks whether we can save money by contributing volunteer labor as part of the match required for a grant (using Volunteer Value to convert the time and driving to an estimated dollar value). Simmons says that this works both ways - it can decrease the cost by taking Tahawus up on their volunteer labor option in the quote, and we can also use our volunteer labor as up to half of the required grant match. Hatfield checks that she should go ahead and apply for the Bender grant and continue asking people for pledges of contributions for the match portion. Simmons confirms that this is the right plan, as there's no guarantee that we'll get an LTA grant if we just wait for those to come around. Simmons asks whether we're taking donations or pledges, and Hatfield tells us that the phrasing she's been using indicates that the contributions being sought are contingent on getting the Bender grant. Thus, she'll have to have new conversations with the same people if we end up pursuing a different grant.

5) Surprise Cave Volunteer Stewardship Agreement

Simmons tells us that this needs to be renewed by March 31. He's gone back and forth with [REDACTED] at the DEC. Each time he's been down to the site, the gate has been unlocked. He also spoke with [REDACTED], who wants to talk later this year about the future of the cave. He sounded enthusiastic enough that Simmons may try asking for permission for some limited visitation. He's tried convincing the powers that be that we need to get some of the younger caving crew into the cave to learn it. He also still wants to find another person to take the lead on this until he has more time for it when he's no longer President. Engel asks who's in that area.

6) March Board meeting date

Berger tells the group that a major commitment has come up which is going to prevent him from participating in meetings on Saturdays in March and April. Folsom, who had originally asked to shift to Saturdays, could make the Sunday adjacent to the upcoming scheduled Board meeting date work. Simmons will ask the Board whether they'd be okay with switching to Sunday.

7) Membership (and renewals)

Hatfield reports that there hasn't been much activity from December into January in terms of renewals, though she's still trying to reach out to some of the expired members. Some just don't know that their memberships have expired. She's sent some e-mails, and will send some more. She's been wondering if we want to have a "corporate" membership level. Berger worries about whether we'd have issues with receiving the sponsorship of groups that we don't want our name associated with. Simmons asks whether this should be a Committee of the Whole discussion topic. Hatfield doesn't think we're ready to tackle it yet in March, but suggests that we could discuss it further at the next EC meeting, and then bring it to the Board for discussion in June.

8) NCC swag

Hatfield says that she dropped the ball on this, partly because she lost the paper she'd taken a number of notes on. She's since found it and will discuss with Hay. Hopefully this won't come at an inconvenient time for the Office Committee.

9) Brochure update

Folsom had sent e-mail to [REDACTED] asking whether he was interested in taking that project on, but [REDACTED] declined for a number of reasons. Berger mentions that he recently saw [REDACTED] and learned that the [REDACTED], and wonders whether that might lead to him having more energy for projects he'd been turning down. Folsom will check.

10) Guide for landowners

Simmons had started putting together an outline for this document, but it hasn't been fleshed-out yet. To drive his efforts, he's been thinking about how to approach [REDACTED] about [REDACTED] when considering options. He also hasn't yet sat down with Hatfield

and Schwartz yet to discuss their feedback on the challenges during their recent donation. Hatfield will try to get some thoughts together in writing along with Schwartz.

11) Executive Succession ad-hoc Committee update

Simmons hasn't heard from Dumont lately on this topic, though he knows that Dumont did confirm that R. Knott would be available to facilitate our retreat in the April-June timeframe. Berger asks Hatfield whether she's seen any movement on the Trustee side, and she tells us that she hasn't. Engel is worried that the Trustees are going to just try to shuffle us around between the officer positions. Berger shares that the West Virginia Cave Conservancy just had a change in President after many years. Engel reminds us that this sort of thing simply isn't a choice that the officers can make. Hatfield isn't sure who the Trustees should reach out to. Folsom asks what would happen if we scaled back the activities that the NCC takes on and ended up just doing the "core hole-in-the-ground" stuff like some other conservancies that are less active in education, collaboration, programming, research, etc., because that would reduce the demands placed on the leadership of the Conservancy. Berger thinks that would be rather sad, but he also notes that it's somewhat impractical for us to act like some of the groups Folsom is thinking of, because they have available to them a specific large funding source that we do not. Simmons also notes that we may be able to obtain funding for an Executive Director for a few years. Berger points out that we might also see a step function in our membership numbers and volunteer pool if we ceased to effectively be the "New York Cave Conservancy" by acquiring a property in another one of the states that's theoretically part of our coverage area. Folsom suggests that this is a great discussion... of the sort that we ought to have at an offsite development retreat. He also asks whether Simmons and Berger insist on being off of the EC at the end of the year. Berger responds that he only insists on solving our continuity problem, and feels that the issue isn't just who to put into the officer seats.

12) Native American Acknowledgment ad-hoc Committee update

Simmons hasn't heard an update on this topic from Dumont lately. Hatfield and Simmons have offered some leads for Dumont to connect with at other organizations.

13) Onesquethaw winter bat protection device

Engel hasn't heard back from the USFWS, but the word he's heard through other channels is that no matter how we craft the language, any device designed to keep the endangered species out of the cave is going to be considered disallowed under the Endangered Species Act, even if allowing them into the cave is known to result in their death during a flood. Berger inquires where that word came from, and how it can be the case given that [REDACTED] was in support of our proposal. Engel says that he's going to restart the process by talking with [REDACTED], and figuring out if the person he's been trying to contact is indeed the right person to talk with. Hatfield has two comments coming out of her recent attendance at NEBWG. First, there was a study presented on efforts to deter bats from roosting in under-construction habitats like bridges. The second is that the UMD researcher whose class is analyzing our data from the Human Influences on Caves study presented a recommendation in their poster to gate Onesquethaw so as to allow the bats to avoid being disturbed by humans. Hatfield pointed that out to E. Davis and Ingalls, who need to have a conversation with the researchers about the flooding issue. They'll look into whether there's some format in which we can share the issue and how it impacts the usefulness of the poster's suggestion (or lack thereof). She hadn't noticed that this poster was there until the last day of the conference. According to the data presented on it, apparently Onesquethaw and Thook experienced the most bat disturbance during the study period. Engel is very confused and skeptical that this finding could be correct, and there's some worry that the researchers may have accidentally confused two of the sites for each other.

14) Opportunity to collaborate with Secret Caverns

Engel reports that he dropped the ball on this topic, and will contact RJ to discuss the one-sheet we'd decided we could try to produce for him to share with visitors who want to know about next steps to take to visit a wild cave.

15) Preserve infrastructure buildouts

See below.

16) Salamander grand opening and website presence

Folsom tells us that Gentry had said something about waiting for a kiosk design. Simmons tells us that there are multiple things in motion that need to be taken care of - the website presence, a grand opening ceremony, and the kiosk. Berger is wondering whether the real problem here is that the message that the webpage is supposed to be ready prior to the signing of a deal we're pursuing never actually leaves the EC meeting and ends up with the people who need to execute on it, and that someone simply needs to actually tell them that it should not be waiting for anything else. Morris-Siegel isn't able to send an e-mail at this moment, but Simmons notes that Armen previously did offer specific instructions about what was needed for the webpage. He also tells us that the challenge there with the kiosk is that there's essentially no substantial soil in which to stake the kiosk. They had [REDACTED] out to the site to take a look at it, and he wanted to bolt the kiosk into the rock wall; Simmons said "no" to that.

17) Jack Packers grand opening

Folsom asks why we can't put that webpage up. Simmons says it's having the same sort of issues as Salamander. Dumont had been hesitant about whether we should publish the page before we had a final decision about winter closure due to bats. Yet the website has little to do with bats. Hatfield asks what the cost of the kiosk is, and Berger asks whether we still have more of them at Chu's home

that we don't need to pay for. Folsom confirms that we do have more of those, but tells us that the placeholder amount in budgets for purchase of a kiosk has usually been \$500-\$600. The issue for Salamander is that the posts need to get sunk way into the ground, and there's not enough soil there for that. Additionally, KLT hasn't done all of their buildout, which has been postponed to this year. Hatfield offers that we can apply for a grant from Stewart's Shops through the end of this month. As for Jack Packers, the trail is laid out, though it may need some water bars, and [REDACTED] is happy with it. We still need to build the changing area and put up a kiosk. We also want to designate the parking area as being on the I-87 Right-of-Way rather than on the preserve itself.

18) Update on [REDACTED] acquisition of additional [REDACTED] property

Simmons hasn't spoken with his contact at [REDACTED] since the last meeting. There were a couple of e-mails with [REDACTED], whose title recently changed because his term expired. They have a new Executive Director, and introductions are going to be made. The plan is to give the [REDACTED] the winter before resuming conversations about this project.

19) Fundraising

Hatfield tells us that she's applied for the Bank of Greene County grant for kiosk signage for Project Guestbook. She wants us to get this project, including the website, in place prior to the next NRO and Members' Day, and is going to push for that. We can put out a request to the Technology Committee and see if Chu would help. She also wants to approach Stewart's Shops again and see if they might contribute things like hotdog and hamburger rolls and beverages.

20) Project Guestbook

See above. We're trying to come up with a timeline for implementation.

21) NYS unique geological features and NYS geological travel map update

Engel tells us that there doesn't appear to be any movement in terms of writing the regulations for it. Simmons asks whether they need the regulations written before they can appoint the board, and Engel responds that they probably don't need the regulations, but they usually do have those before proceeding with anything else.

22) E-mail newsletter

There's no news on this topic. Engel asks what the schedule is for the regular newsletter. Folsom responds that it comes out just before the Board meeting if there's content for it. Brass asked for corrections to the masthead for the PDF newsletter. Folsom would like to get one of the electronic newsletters out before the caving season starts, and thinks that task is between Engel and Moultrip.

23) End of year appeal

Hatfield says that we didn't have one because everyone's been inundated by other organizations' appeals. Engel suggests the radical idea of not trying to have one, and instead having a start-of-caving-season appeal. Folsom notes that the Giving Tuesday campaign brought in essentially nothing. Berger is frustrated at the fact that year after year, we fail to get this appeal out, because there is a different response rate to things that are physically received in a mailbox than things that arrive via e-mail. Simmons adds that these campaigns are less effective after the recent tax law changes that have resulted in fewer people itemizing. Berger agrees that that's true, but also notes that he reacts to physical appeals with notes about what the organization has been up to. Hatfield is thinking of something along the lines of "12 appeals in 12 weeks" with one about each preserve leading up to the opening of caving season. Facebook posts are more about membership and joining than fundraising, while e-mails to the membership are not as targeted at joining, but are more geared towards seeking additional donations. Simmons will assist with editing of content.

24) Conservancy Communications ad-hoc Committee update

No news on this topic.

25) Vermont Land Trust Memorandum of Understanding

There's no news on this topic, either. However, Simmons saw a note that the head of VLT is stepping down.

26) Website modernization

Simmons thinks it's time for this to happen. The current website is temporarily a static version of the dynamic website that got compromised. Hatfield asks how much it would cost to have the website redone professionally. Berger expresses skepticism that we'd find someone offering to do it who wouldn't just make us another WordPress website. However, it might be time to redo it anyway.

27) Board Manual updates

No news on this topic since the last meeting.

28) Acquisitions

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

29) Report scheduling

The meeting is on 3/4 or 3/5. Officer attachments need to be to Berger by 2/27. Committee reports need to be to officers by 2/20. A first request for reports should go out by 2/6. Engel notes that he hasn't been receiving requests for preserve reports. Berger took a look at the requests he's received, and confirmed that the addresses for the preserves Engel manages seem to be missing from those e-mails.

30) [REDACTED]

31) Certificate of Merit Awards for 2023

The EC discussed candidates for this year's awards in executive session. A slate should be presented to the Board for approval at the June meeting.

End: 1:24pm