

Marshall Martz Memorial Astronomical Association

Martz-Kohl Observatory

General Membership meeting - 4/22/24

Vice President Tom Traub called the meeting to order (in the absence of President Corey Swanson) at 7:40 p.m.

VP Traub called for reading of the Secretary's Report of the April 22, 2024 general meeting.

Secretary's Report: Walt Pickut read the minutes of the meeting. VP Traub called for discussions or questions. There being none he called for a motion to accept the Secretary's report as presented. So moved by John Anderson, seconded by Judge Campbell. Unanimously approved without objection.

Treasurers Report: John Anderson presented the treasurers report, beginning with the balance sheet indicating that we obtained a new CD as of the 18th of the month in a denomination of \$10,000. He reported that the CD initiated on May 1 of 2023 is now valued at \$10,367.37, due for maturity in June 2024. Due for rollover. John then presented the remaining relevant figures, indicating that we now are running a negative balance of \$723.74. However, when factoring in recent purchase of merchandise for our online and on-site stores and solar eclipse sunglasses profits, this negative balance represents no difficulty and is easily covered. STEM Camp received a \$500 donation from a member. While this program is at present not a profit center, it is unanimously approved and supported by the board as an essential component of MKO's public education and outreach. VP Traub the treasurers report as presented. Walt Pickut so moved, seconded by Phil Evans. Unanimously approved without objection.

Committee Reports:

Lauri Livingston announced that the board approved five items:

1. The CD reaching maturity on June 1 will be rolled over for another 13-month term-to-maturity at approximately 4.5% (precise figure TBD on June 1).
2. An additional \$1000 has been added to the Sky Shed project to town for increasing materials costs.
3. We are purchasing 70 new chairs (35 with arms and 35 without arms, with blue fabric upholstery) for the classroom and planetary room, paid for from the savings account. Josh Campbell, board member who spearheaded this project, displayed one of the chairs on camera for the benefit of members attending virtually. Delivery due within approximately four days.
4. Lauri will submit an additional grant application to the Hultquist Foundation on May 10, 2024 in the amount of \$9571 for purchase of a new security system. Backup application, if necessary, will be submitted to the Lenna Foundation.
5. We are purchasing a new roadside sign to match the new sign beside the main building entrance

Facilities Committee: John Anderson reported that the sky shed project is underway, the chairs have been ordered. The security system purchase and installation is underway, and new insulation and drywall panels left over from Radio Astronomy Room construction will be installed in the West Garage (North wall). Roof repairs have been completed and removal of the vent over the office area is being considered. Material for this, including a new drain, has been purchased, some of which can also be used to repair a leak in the Kohl Dome (with additional purpose of a sealing strip).

Program Committee: Walt Pickut announced that the next month's speaker, Dr. Dunham at Fredonia University unfortunately canceled. The search is underway for another speaker on short notice. We are still awaiting a reply from Doctor Alexandra Yep for future speaking engagement. The space program has become very valuable in terms of public awareness of MKO, astronomical science, new memberships, and contributions toward ongoing operation of MMM AA.

Solar Eclipse: VP Tom Traub thanked the general membership for an excellent turnout for the solar eclipse event. He announced that we should all be congratulated for probably the first-and-only-time-ever, for discouraging people from coming to the observatory. Tom said, "We plan for the worst and it never materialized." The success was measured by the arrival of only four cars and approximately 30 visitors. Planning for visibility of totality had apparently also been successful on site. Tom announced that the NASA Solar Eclipse Ambassador Program of which he was a part, reported over 700 members but participated in the program presenting 1127 events and reached 187,000 citizens. That did not include NPR, Associated Press, local television stations and newspapers it became an outstanding PR and media blitz not only for the solar eclipse event but by the Martz-Kohl Observatory across the United States. Tom had the privilege of addressing several thousand people at the 28 events he personally hosted throughout the region. In summary, Tom said it was great PR for us, and for him it was fun.

Educational Outreach: Tom Traub reported that the STEM Camp will take place between July 15 and 19, with 21 students signed up so far and others pending from outside Chautauqua County, prompting widening of the readiness for acceptance.

Technology: Tom Traub reported that the ACP (scheduling) and the Boltwood (weather station) systems are under revision, the Boltwood system having become obsolete and nonfunctional. Software workarounds have been unsuccessful. Tom reported that the Boltwood can be replaced by different vendor at approximately one third the cost (under \$1000). Finalization of installation and updating is expected shortly. The main office computer issue has been resolved.

Public and Media Relations: Andy Felong Andy reported that we achieved extremely good publicity for the eclipse event with the last two issues of the Jamestown Gazette. We also have an excellent write up in the Post Journal concerning the STEM Camp at approximately 400 hits on the website. Andy also noted that our publicity produced by both Tom and Andy had gone as far as the Washington Post, NPR, Associated Press, the Erie

News. Andy met General agreement from the board and the membership that after all of the eclipse events Tom Traub was “Still moving!” Andy noted that the website now has many excellent photos from the eclipse event. Andy also announced that he has been in the process of moving our website to a new more advanced and less expensive server, still working on connecting to the control room WebCam. Andy called for members to submit astrophotography or anything else of astronomy interest to him for use on the website or Facebook. Our Facebook account can now also connect to Instagram which improves distribution to a wider demographic.

Merchandise: MKO-branded merchandise is now available on site and online.

Unfinished Business: None reported.

New Business:

Lauri Livingston noted that we still have at least 6-7000 unused solar eclipse glasses. We will retain approximately 300 for future use, and contribute the remainder to the solar eclipse glasses to solar eclipse sites around the world suggested by Astronomers Without Borders (who will pay for shipping), including local distribution to venues like SUNY Buffalo. This is considered preferable to discarding them and will distribute MKO branded material to distant, remote sites around the world.

A new member requested that we provide a basket for the Bemus Point Library raffle/fundraiser. Laurie recommended we contribute a \$50 family membership and of about \$20 worth of MKO-branded merchandise.

Correspondence: JPL Planet Watch, which includes MKO member Kyle Lynch, is looking for more people, citizen scientists, to be involved in the program. Anyone interested should check our website on which we will post contact information.

For the Good of the Association: A technologically advanced, scientific thermometer for use in the control room has been donated by member Gary Campbell. Thank you to Gary.

Walt Pickut noted a recent conversation with Past President Gary Nelson. Gary requested consideration, perhaps at the next meeting, of an open house acknowledgment of our many Foundation-contributors reflecting on the more advanced and more complete nature of MKO and their indispensable role in our advancement in the public good.

In addition, while suggested we consider purchase of an MKO-branded jacket shirt or other personal memento for Dr. Ron Kohl as a “Father’s Day” gift in recognition of his position as a “Founding Father” of MKO to be presented at a future date.

Upcoming Events: Friday 4/26, 9:00 p.m. we have a request to host visitors (three) from Canada.

Also confirming to scout groups who requested tours while working on their Astronomy Badges, dates and numbers TBD.

Next Meeting Dates for Board of Directors and General Membership: Wednesday, May 22, 2024 at 6:30 and 7:30 p.m., respectively.

P. S.: Laurie Livingston requested that nobody bring a cake to celebrate her birthday (age unspecified) on that night except, of course, for those who do bring a cake.

Meeting was adjourned by popular acclamation of all members present and ratified by VP Traub at 8:30 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Walter W Pickut

Secretary