

NORTHEASTERN CAVE CONSERVANCY, INC

Minutes

March 8, 2020 10:00 AM
Saugerties, NY

Meeting called to order at 10:03am

1. Introduction and greetings – Robert Simmons

2. Attendance

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

Trustees: M. Chu, D. Hedges, R. Armen, M. Ingalls, K. Dumont, L. Hatfield, E. Nieman, J. Morris-Siegel

3. Absent with proxy: None

4. Absent without designated proxy: W. Russell

The Board may appoint proxies from the members in attendance.

[Nobody else was in attendance, so no proxy was proposed]

5. Officers' Reports

President: Attachment A

Vice President: Attachment B

Treasurer: Attachment C

Secretary: Attachment D

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

Second by Morris-Siegel

For: Rest

Abstain: Engel

[The Committee of the Whole is opened]

Topics:

6.1. Onesquethaw Cave Preserve Management Plan review (Engel)

*[The Onesquethaw Management Plan was up for discussion at the December meeting, but a miscommunication resulted in the Board receiving an earlier draft of the plan's proposed revisions than was intended. Engel indicates that the only change to what was discussed is under **Surface Management** and represents the Board's decision to not have the land farmed.]*

Everyone seemed satisfied with the proposed change, and no substantive discussion occurred.

6.2. Spider Cave Preserve Management Plan revisions (Dumont)

*[Dumont circulated this plan for review over e-mail and indicates that there are only small changes in the **Surface Management** and **Future Plans** sections.]*

Berger inquired about new language that had been added about camping; we concluded that we weren't sure we were prepared or protected for the risks that might come from granting permission for that, and struck the relevant sentence. Ingalls asked about templating of Management Plans and where we got last time we brought this up; Berger reluctantly recalled that he and she were working on it years ago, she'd produced an initial draft, the project stalled, and then was presumed to have been folded into the charter of the Governance Committee, which has also been struggling to find time to meet and work on their other projects. Hedges asked about maps in Management Plans, as a couple of the plans now have them. The conclusion was that as the plan is a living document changing according to conditions year-to-year, and a map is a more static document (excepting, of course, when a new cave is being mapped and explored), we should remove the maps from the plans and simply post them on the website where they're easier to find and benefit more interested parties.

6.3. 2020 Members Day date and venue (Simmons)

[This is following up on our discussion at the previous meeting.]

The scheduled date is July 18, with August 8 as a backup. We had planned to discuss the idea of holding it at the new Traino Preserve with John Palange, hoping he'd be enthusiastic and allow use of some of his land. His untimely passing now makes this seem like the wrong time. A dedication ceremony for the preserve will be needed at some point in the future anyhow.

6.4. Hosting the Spring 2020 Northeastern Regional Organization (NRO) meeting (Morris-Siegel)

[We agreed at the last meeting to host NRO. This topic is to follow up on progress and assign action items.]

The dates are May 15-17. Morris-Siegel expressed frustration at the Board because of the deafening silence in response to his prompts for people to step up and take charge of various tasks (except for Ingalls and Engel who abstained on the vote to host the event). One venue that was looked at would cost \$2,500/night. The Harley Rendezvous site is a possibility, but it would be expensive to break even. The Vermont Cavers Association (VCA) might do the Sunday breakfast; Sassu-Laviero is looking to grottos for a volunteer to run the dinner. We want to have a lot of trips - at the last Vermont NRO, there were about 100 people with 180 trip signups, and registration ran 24/7. We should push the NCC caves - one thought to make more trips possible is allowing Bensons to be pre-rigged.

We need to have people assigned to tasks, and costs estimated. The venue we're going for will cost \$1,650 for the first 125 people. We think this is workable with a \$15 registration fee and a \$10/person/night fee and that we can avoid having a day-pass fee for people only coming to the meeting or to socialize or staff a booth during the day. We'll ask Sterling about Met or Northern New Jersey Grotto (NNJG) doing the Saturday breakfast. We'll ask Dunham about a T-shirt design and possibly giving a talk. Folsom asked whether we want to give any of the National Cave and Karst Management Symposium (NCKMS) talks; Berger is sure nobody at NRO wants to hear about Risk Management for Cave Conservancies, and Engel likely doesn't think the Clarksville usage study is right for an NRO program, but the New York State Conservation Partnership Program (NYSCPP) project talk might make for a good program... when the project is further along. Simmons will look into whether the brewery that contributed to the 40th Anniversary is interested in chipping in for NRO as well. Folsom will arrange with Speleobooks for transport of the squeezebox. Nieman will wrangle tripleaders. There's a \$250 deposit that needs to be made for the site.

[A lunch order was placed at this point, and Engel had some choice comments about what the existence of eggplant was an indication of.]

6.5. New York State Conservation Partnership Program (NYSCPP) scientific research project grant update (Simmons, Hatfield, Ingalls)

[This is the usual followup topic on progress with the grant project. Ingalls had submitted a talk abstract for presentation at the Northeast Bat Working Group (NEBWG) meeting which occurred in January, and Hatfield was the NCC's designated representative.]

Hatfield and Schwartz have been changing consumables for the acoustic detectors at Clarksville and Onesquethaw and checking on the cameras at those sites, and Simmons has also been checking on cameras elsewhere. No real dent seems to have been made in the camera batteries so far. Ingalls and Hatfield reported that NEBWG went well, despite technical difficulties. Regarding the timeline for the scientific study grant, the big report is due at the end of July.

On the topic of NYSCPP transaction grants, applications have been submitted for both the Salamander acquisition and the Traino Preserve acquisition.

6.6. Land Trust Alliance (LTA) New York Land Conservation Conference (Engel)

[As our plan to offer a field trip to a few of our preserves did not pan out (see item #23 in the EC Meeting Minutes in Attachment D), Engel does not expect to attend. This is, however, a good conference for us to be represented at, so we're looking for members interested in attending. The conference is May 7-8 in Saratoga Springs.]

Simmons plans to go, and Folsom could as well. Engel says the main value is in networking. Berger also comments that the sessions would hold more value for us if we moved into the world of holding conservation easements, which is a possibility. Morris-Siegel plans to go to the Massachusetts conference at the end of March (if it happens). Folsom suggests that we should ask if Young might want to go. Hatfield expresses interest. Berger reminds us that whoever attends should be sure to bring some of our brochures, even though we're not going to have a vendor table.

6.7. Preserve documentation (Morris-Siegel)

[At the last meeting, we agreed to try Landscape land conservation software for a year; this topic is an update on progress.]

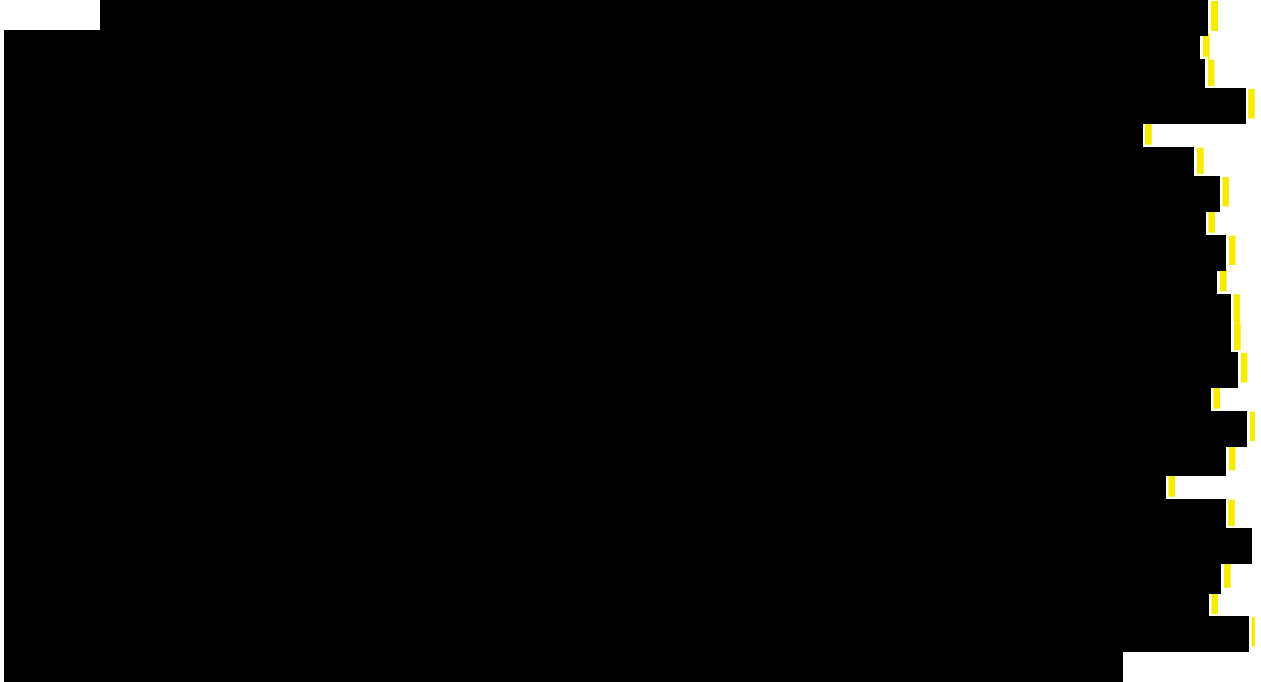
We had voted to spend money for a one-year subscription to this service at the last meeting. Morris-Siegel downloaded the free trial version, and reports that the learning curve is steep. It also takes a lot of time to upload everything. He recommends that we hold off on spending the money in order to first gather up all of our documents. Armen asks if it will be time-consuming after the initial setup, and Morris-Siegel says that he doesn't think so. It will likely involve a few people and a lot of time to get it set up, and then it'll be easy. The Geographic Information System (GIS) work will probably be about 20-30 hours (it took 4 hours to set up just Merlins). It seems that Massachusetts has the most land trusts of any state, as many towns have their own volunteer land trust, but some

land trusts pay a person to handle all the setup of this system and uploading of documents. Simmons notes that he has access to a fullsize scanner and may be able to help digitize some documents.

6.8. NCC and Kingston Land Trust (KLT) draft “Access to Property Agreement” (Simmons)

[A first draft of the agreement is provided with this agenda.]

[Ingalls departed for another commitment partway through this discussion]



6.9. Federal court ruling about the Northern Long Eared Bat (NLEB) (Simmons, Engel)

[A federal court recently issued a ruling in a lawsuit related to the listing of the NLEB as “threatened.” This has implications for the listing status of the bat, but likely not for us. We will fill the Board in on the basic details (see also topic #4 in the EC Meeting Minutes in Attachment D).]

We reshaped the explanation of this topic in the EC Meeting Minutes. There were no substantial questions or discussion.

6.10. Draft Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Vermont Land Trust (VLT) (Simmons)

[At Simmons’s request, Youngbaer has drafted an MoU to help us work more closely with VLT. His first draft is provided along with the agenda.]



6.11. Work day for infrastructure at the Traino Preserve? (Hedges)

[See item #14 in the EC Meeting Minutes in Attachment D - Engel wondered if Hedges might want us to schedule one.]

There’s \$300 in the budget for this. We have kiosks available at Chu’s home, though they’re hard to move. Chu is okay with all weekend dates in April. We’ll likely want to take down some small trees for a changing area down in the sink, as there’s not much other area on our land that’s out of the neighbors’ view.

6.12. John Palange (Folsom)

The Board was saddened by the sudden and unexpected loss of the Conservancy’s friend and new neighbor, only months after working with him on finalizing the acquisition of the new Alan Traino Karst Preserve. We had planned to celebrate with him at a dedication ceremony for the preserve, and had been considering asking if we could host our Members Day there. Hedges attended the wake. Folsom was seeking input on what might be appropriate for the Conservancy to send, and Engel noted that Hedges and Folsom know Mrs. Palange best. They’ll work on this outside of the meeting.

6.13. [REDACTED] (Morris-Siegel)

7. Simmons moves to close the Committee of the Whole.
Second by Hedges
For: All
[The Committee of the Whole is closed]

Old Business

8. Simmons moves: The Northeastern Cave Conservancy (NCC) shall donate the sum of \$5,000 to the Kingston Land Trust (KLT) in support of their acquisition and development of the parcel at 32-60 Wilbur Avenue (a.k.a. Lot 56.49-3-1) in Kingston, New York, subject to the following conditions: 1. KLT completes the acquisition of the referenced parcel, 2. KLT completes appropriate due diligence prior to such acquisition, and 3. An agreement to provide for parking, access, stewardship and similar issues, mutually agreeable to both the NCC and KLT, is adopted by both entities.
Second by Folsom
For: All
[The NCC will donate \$5,000 to the Kingston Land Trust to support acquisition of Lot 56.49-3-1 in Kingston, NY, subject to the stipulated conditions.]
[This motion was handled via electronic vote conducted between 1/8/2020 6:04pm and 1/12/20 12:28pm.]

9. Engel moves: The proposed revisions to the Onesquethaw Cave Preserve Management Plan as discussed and amended during the Committee of the Whole are approved.
[See topic #6.1 in Committee of the Whole]
Second by Berger
For: All
[The revised Onesquethaw Cave Preserve Management Plan is approved]

New Business

10. Berger moves: The minutes of the December 8, 2019 Board Meeting are approved.
[The Secretary would like to thank Hatfield, Dumont, Moore, and Folsom for sending in their reviews.]
Second by Hedges
For: All
[The minutes of the December 8, 2019 Board Meeting are approved]
11. Dumont moves: The proposed revisions to the Spider Cave Preserve Management Plan as discussed and amended during the Committee of the Whole are approved.
[See topic #6.2 in Committee of the Whole]
Second by Berger
For: All
[The revised Spider Cave Preserve Management Plan is approved]
12. Engel moves: The proposed 2020 Certificate of Merit recipients, as recommended by the Awards Committee, are approved.
[The Awards Committee has discussed potential recipients for the first year of this award. Names are omitted here for presumably obvious reasons.]
Second by Folsom
- Folsom moves: The Board will enter executive session to discuss the Awards Committee recommendations.
Second by Morris-Siegel
For: All
[The Board entered executive session at 2:08pm]
[The Board exited executive session at 2:15pm]

For: All

[The proposed 2020 Certificate of Merit recipients, as recommended by the Awards Committee, are approved]

Informational point: Next EC meeting will be Sunday, April 26, 2020 at 10 AM at the Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy offices.

Informational point: the Summer Board meeting will be Sunday, June 7, 2020 at 10 AM at the Chu residence.

Informational point: the late Summer EC meeting will be Sunday, August 23, 2020 at 10 AM, location to be determined.

13. Simmons moves: The NCC Fall meeting will be Sunday, September 20, 2020 at 10 AM at HRP Associates.

Second by Hedges

For: All

[The NCC Fall meeting will be Sunday, September 20, 2020 at 10 AM at HRP Associates]

14. Simmons moves to thank the Frank D. Greco Memorial Senior Citizens Center for hosting this NCC meeting, and Dumont for making the arrangements.

Second by Hatfield

For: Rest

Abstain: Dumont

[The NCC thanks the Frank D. Greco Memorial Senior Citizens Center for hosting, and Dumont has the NCC's thanks for arranging the meeting]

15. Engel moves to adjourn.

Second by Morris-Siegel

For: All

[The meeting is adjourned]

Meeting adjourned at 2:28pm

**Attachment A
President's Report**

1. Preserve management opportunities: With Devon taking on the Traino Preserve as Interim Manager, I'd like to find someone to take on the management duties at Bentleys. Also, Thom has asked us to find a person to come on board as the co-manager at Onesquethaw with the intent for them to take it over in the future.
2. I have applied for NYSCPP Transaction Grants for both the Traino Preserve purchase and the Salamander Preserve donation. Should hear back by the end of April.
3. We understand that our friends, the Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy have taken over the Holly Hock Hollow Preserve from the Audubon Society and have approached NCC for assistance with the management of the karst on the property.
4. Board Elections are coming up fast. If you have names of likely candidates we should reach out to, please let either me or Norm nominating@necaveconservancy.org know.
5. This year's Members Day has been tentatively scheduled for July 18th (alternate of August 8th), pending confirmation of location. We may try to coordinate with a formal dedication ceremony of the Traino Preserve.
6. Spring NRO: Don't forget we are hosting the event in May, so assistance will be appreciated by all who can. Discussion at the Board meeting.

Cave Preserve Management Plan Review Schedule

Year	March	June	September	December
2020	Spider	Clarksville		Bentleys
2021	Ella Armstrong	Knox	Traino	Sellecks
2022	Bensons	Merlins		Onesquethaw
2023	Spider	Clarksville		Bentleys
2024	Ella Armstrong	Knox	Traino	Sellecks

CAVE PRESERVE REPORTS:

1. Bensons (Luke Mazza)

Nothing new to report.

2. Bentleys (Devon Hedges)

Progress: None

Problems: Nothing New

Plans: Board display documents should be reproduced and installed before next season. Will reach out to neighbors to inform them about contacting property owners for hunting permission.

3. Clarksville (Thom Engel)

DEC did a bat count on January 30. They were unable to access the Gregory section due to high water at the entrance. In the rest of the cave they counted 2 little brown bats and 1 tri-colored bat. Porcupines seem to have an attraction to plastic. It has not been an issue in past years, but this year the sign by the Ward entrance got partially eaten.

4. Ella Armstrong (Erik Nieman)

Progress: No progress to report.

Issues: Property boundaries are not currently marked that I am able to see from walking the preserve.

Plans: Attempting to acquire property survey and/or locate survey pins in order to mark boundaries. Board currently looking into obtaining a replacement copy of property survey to re-establish boundaries at preserve. Periodic trail and parking maintenance. A sign-in log will be placed at the kiosk for 2020.

5. Knox (Mitch Berger)

Progress: Trail checkup happened, with no problems evident.

Issues: The Great Divide rope is [presumable] still there.

Engel and Berger still need to investigate what may be poison parsnip plants.

I expect we're still going to have confusion over the Knox opening date at the end of the winter.

Plans: Periodic property inspection, and trail maintenance once the plants start to flower.
Possible graffiti removal in Knox and investigation of methods.
Addition of trail markers and reposting of property.
Boundary marking.
Removal of the Great Divide rope.
Investigation of troublesome plant species.

6. Merlins (Morgan Ingalls & Jacob Morris-Siegel)

Digging on Dome 12 has ended until warmer, drier weather. We are still looking for a culvert to stabilize the entrance. Desired dimensions are 15' x 30" inner diameter, in plastic. Engel will ask Zinzow if he has anything available. The loop trail will need some maintenance once snow is gone. We will probably schedule a work day in April or early May.

7. Onesquethaw (Thom Engel)

A letter was sent to Stanton Farms LLC informing them not to farm our property. I have played telephone tag with Mike Stanton. He indicated he understood the reasoning and that we'd be marking the property boundary. He suggested he might wish to revisit the idea of farming our property in the future.
In the meantime, a workday will be held Saturday, April 4 to place boundary markers on along the southeast boundary of the preserve. If anyone has a post driver, it would facilitate the work.

8. Sellecks (Joey O'Reilly)

Progress: Trees that were down on the trail were cut with the help of Erik and his chainsaw
Problems: No problems I am aware of
Plans: No plans at the moment.

9. Spider (Kevin Dumont)

Progress: Nothing to report.
Problems: None to report.
Plans: Creation of a trail along both the base and the top of the escarpment is planned for 2020.

10. Traino Preserve (Devon Hedges)

Progress: Almost had a survey day, snow melt and high water levels are discouraging. Preliminary parking area and trail flagging, access map and visitation guidelines created; shared with initial visit by Boston Grotto, 1/2020.

Problems: website should be updated with "traino@necaveconservancy.org" or similar address forwarding to preserve manager email. Page should be created and management plan should be uploaded.
[Ed: The Board discussed alternative addresses, as the above might be confusing given how close it is to what was recently an individual's address. traino_preserve@necaveconservancy.org and slingerlands@necaveconservancy.org were suggested, and Chu informed us that the former had actually already been set up.]

Plans: Access map and visitation guidelines need to be edited for public information on the web and other. Initial versions of this material were prepared for a Boston Grotto trip. Parking area, trail, kiosk, changing area, cave survey completion.

OTHER COMMITTEES (PRESIDENT):

Acquisitions (Chuck Porter, Bob Simmons)

Salamander Preserve

Received Planning Board approval for the lot line adjustment. Had necessary additions to survey completed, need to have signed by Simmons and Planning Board, scheduling closing. And working on terms for the deed. Kingston Land Trust has purchased adjoining property. Draft agreement for mutual access/stewardship between KLT and NCC distributed for review and comment.

Vermont Land Trust / [REDACTED]:

Met with VLT. Peter Youngbaer and John Dunham working on initial issues 1. MOU between organizations and 2. a cave in Arlington.

[REDACTED], and [REDACTED]: nothing new to report.

[REDACTED]: Hay met with the owners early in 2020. They say they are too busy at this time to discuss, and we will keep in the loop.

Nominating (Norm Berg)

The search is on for Trustee candidates to run in the Spring 2020 election. An announcement for Trustee candidates will be in the next NCC News. This year's voting will use Google forms and connected applications. Below is the schedule, using June 1 as the next Board meeting date:

May 8 (Friday): Last day to submit candidate bio/platforms.
May 11 - 12 (Monday and/or Tuesday): Ballots and bios/platforms are emailed to the membership.
May 22 (Friday): Voting closes at the end of day ET.
May 23 -24 (Saturday or Sunday): Results are tallied.
May 24 -25 (Sunday or Monday): Results are provided to NCC Officers, Notify candidates of results.
June 1 (Sunday): First Board meeting where newly elected members are seated.

[Ed: June 1 is a Monday, and the Summer Board meeting is Sunday, June 7.]

[Ed: Ingalls noted that a possible move to Maine mid-term may impact her plans.]

Risk Management (Mitch Berger)

Progress: Participated in the annual Land Trust Alliance risk management training program (eligibility for Terrafirma discounts).

Prepared and filed our 2020 Terrafirma application (our policy has been successfully renewed).

Obtained satisfactory written resolution to the one remaining question about the Volunteer Workers Accident insurance policy the Board decided it would like to add this year at renewal time.

Issues: None.

Plans: Add insurance coverage (G/L and Terrafirma) for Salamander if/when we close.

Assemble the rest of the committee membership.

Pick up other issues that were in-progress with the former ad-hoc committee.

Tory's Cave ad hoc committee (Bob Simmons)

Nothing new since last meeting,

Bat Hibernation Ad hoc committee (Mitch Berger, Emily Davis, Mike Warner, Morgan Ingalls)

Game cameras (9) deployed at preserves (Clarksville (3), Onesquethaw, Bentleys, Bensons, Knox, Ella & Merlins. Using the cameras in lieu of the proposed light detection devices to assess visitation in the off season.

Governance ad hoc (Devon Hedges)

Progress: None

Problems: Haven't given the committee due attention

Plans: Revisit committee goals, outline areas of interest and share with Board

Attachment B Vice President's Report

Bylaws Committee (Joe Levinson)

Nothing to report.

Education (Thom Engel)

Shenendehowa Science & Health Discovery Night (the successor to SAGE) has been scheduled for Friday, April 24th from 6:30 to 9:00. I have not yet decided whether it is worth participating. Since there are no caves in the Shenendehowa school district this has always seemed marginal.

Science Committee (Larry Davis)

No report received.

Special Use (Thom Engel)

As of 14 February 2020 we already have 15 reservations for the year. This year with the BSA in bankruptcy I have decided to ask for COIs from the scouts.

I have finally redone the spreadsheet I use for tracking group use. Ever since the closures for the Northern Long-eared Bat, the sheet was not quite right. (It used to be divided by caves open all year versus only part of the year.) The sheet is now divided geographically.

Surprise Cave Committee (Al DeMaria)

No report received.

Thacher Park (Thom Engel)

Casey Holzworth has left OPRHP for a position with DEC. My new (temporary) contact is Andy Damon. The 2020 permit has been applied for and received.

Cave Protection (Thom Engel)

I heard from Assemblywoman's Chief of Staff that they are in the middle of budget stuff. They will pursue the cave protection bill after a budget is passed (probably at the last minute on March 31 – my words not her's.) The new fiscal year for New York starts April 1.

**Attachment C
Treasurer's Report**



**Northeastern Cave Conservancy Inc
Profit & Loss Budget vs. Actual
January 1 through February 16, 2020**

02/16/2020

**Ordinary Income/Expense
Income
Donations**

Jan 1 - Feb 16, 20	Budget
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Auction Donations	0.00	1,800.00
Donations - Other	840.74	6,841.00
Total Donations	840.74	8,641.00
Interest Earned	0.81	10.00
Membership Income	270.00	2,700.00
Total Income	1,111.55	11,351.00
Expense		
Acquisitions	150.00	2,000.00
Bank Charges	10.21	75.00
Donations-outgoing	0.00	200.00
Dues	0.00	350.00
Education	0.00	50.00
Executive		
President	0.00	100.00
Secretary	0.00	50.00
Treasurer	0.00	50.00
VP	0.00	50.00
Total Executive	0.00	250.00
Grant Expense	399.00	0.00
Insurance	812.00	2,516.00
Legal Fees	0.00	1,000.00
Licenses & Permits	0.00	125.00
Meeting Expense	0.00	100.00
Meetings & Conferences	0.00	300.00
Membership Expenses	0.00	125.00
Miscellaneous	0.00	100.00
Office Expense	0.00	100.00
Postage	0.00	100.00
Preserves-Maintenance		
Bensons	0.00	250.00
Bentleys	0.00	100.00
Clarksville	0.00	100.00
Ella Armstrong	0.00	100.00
Knox	0.00	100.00
Merlins	0.00	100.00
Onesquethaw	0.00	50.00
Sellecks	0.00	100.00
Spider	0.00	100.00
Traino	0.00	300.00
Total Preserves-Maintenance	0.00	1,300.00
Promotion	0.00	1,500.00
Publishing		
Mailings	0.00	50.00
Website	0.00	60.00
Total Publishing	0.00	110.00
Science	0.00	500.00
Sponsorships	0.00	250.00
Taxes on Properties	283.33	300.00

Total Expense	1,654.54	11,351.00
Net Ordinary Income	-542.99	0.00
Other Income/Expense		
Other Income		
Net Gain or Loss Vanguard Life	25.97	0.00
Total Other Income	25.97	0.00
Net Other Income	25.97	0.00
Net Income	-517.02	0.00

The paperwork was prepared, notarized and delivered via registered mail to the Town of Coeymans to make the Alan Traino Karst Preserved exempt from local town taxes.

Fundraising - (Vacant):

Folsom reports that we have raised \$11,127.60 for the Traino Preserve acquisition.

Barn Dance Subcommittee - Emily Davis & Mike Warner:

Plans: Have another barn dance

Problems: No time to plan until May

Progress: None

Investment Committee - John Fioroni:

No report received

Membership Committee - Peter Youngbaer:

Progress:

Membership Renewals and New Members:

Membership remains fairly steady, up a total of 6 overall. All renewal notices for memberships up through the end of February have been sent. March notices will go out this weekend (8 current members renew in March). The data base is current as of today, February 20.

Our current membership stands as follows, compared to the baseline of April 22, 2012:

February 20, 2020	April 22, 2012 (baseline)
Life: 63 (+1)	Life: 18
Family Life: 9	Family Life: 0
Benefactor: 7 (-2)	Benefactor: 10
Regular: 75 (+3)	Regular: 88
Family: 19 (+5)	Family: 16
Institutional: 6 (-1)	Institutional: 3
Total: 179 (+6)	Total: 135

Note: Total in November was 173; September was 175; June was 176; March was 178; November, 2018 was 173; September, 2018 was 180. High point was 209 in March, 2017.

Institutional Members: *Boston Grotto, Central Connecticut Grotto, Helderberg-Hudson Grotto, Vermont Cavers Association, Northern New Jersey Grotto, New Jersey Initial Response Team, and Camp Echo Lake. If your grotto or organization isn't listed here, please urge them to renew or join. Thank you.*

Problems:

None.

Plans:

Normal Operations: Will continue to send renewal notices, as well as second and third notices, as applicable. For 2020, my plan is to create a template for a new Life Member certificate and circulate to the officers for approval.

I have begun to send NCC “schwag” to Benefactors (lanyard) and new members (window sticker) as of the new year. Just to follow up on our idea of a “thank you” acknowledgment.

Peter Youngbaer, Membership Chair Reminder: email address: pyoungbaer@gmail.com

Office Committee Report - Emily Davis & Mike Warner:

Problems: None

Progress: Status Quo

Plans: none specifically

Note: Office closed for the month of March due to travel

Publications – Christa Hay:

Mailchimp sent out for nominations and requests for newsletter articles. I would like the Board to revisit highlighting our preserves in the newsletters. We used to do it so there was some substance to the newsletters. The preserve manager(s) would write the article and provide photos. They were given a 3 month deadline to provide the article. I would like to see this happen again.

Our website needs some updating. Do we have anything new for Recent News? Last article was dated April 2016. Minutes from the fall meeting are not posted. While the website is a separate committee it's also publicity.

[Ed: The Board discussed what to do about the Recent News section. Dumont wonders whether we should take it down entirely, and Engel notes that having it there with old content is the worst of both worlds because it makes it look as if we're moribund. We also discussed other platforms for recent news (mostly social media) and objections to entirely switching to those platforms which not everyone uses. Websites sometimes connect across this divide by providing a link to the platform with the dynamic content, while keeping the static stuff on the website itself. Berger mentioned that many large successful organizations have their current news and events both on their website and synced across multiple other platforms, but doing that takes a lot of work, and sometimes entails having a fulltime social media manager. Folsom does this currently for our Facebook group, and has poked at LinkedIn when necessary, but isn't really looking to have more platforms consume more time and effort. Nieman expresses interest in possibly taking on the role of social media manager.]

I am still looking for any swag photos such as people wearing NCC while doing an activity. Also would like to see more Board members contribute to the newsletter. I did see some conversation on publicity in the last minutes on the website but have never had a Board member contact me to discuss. Communication within the NCC is lacking.

Technology Committee Report – Ramon Armen:

The website for both the Alan Traino Karst Preserve and the Salamander Preserve are under construction and should be either posted or ready to post prior to the next Board meeting. Relatedly, our system for storing and managing various documents and resources should be consolidated; currently many documents exist only in an ephemeral state on individuals computers or email, which can make it difficult both to consolidate information into a location such as the website, as well as to refer back to previous documents at a later point or to keep everything consistent when versions are updated. This includes management plans, cave maps, parcel maps, access restrictions, permitting, etc.

A few areas of the website mentioned the year 2019 in a context to suggest that that was the current year, such as when linking to requirement forms. These were updated to refer to 2020 instead.

I am also looking for high quality photos of the NCC caves, preferably ones that can be scaled and cropped to a 1920x700 resolution, to improve the imagery on the site and to make the header images actually of NCC caves.

Volunteer Value Committee – Vince Kappler:

Progress:

The below table shows that NCC volunteers continue to support the mission of the organization. Special projects and a new acquisition tend to boost a specific year's stats but overall members generally contribute almost the same year over year.

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
			\$703,148.00

2020 VV to date: \$2635.00

Plans:

The IRS has decreased the business mileage rate from \$.58 to \$.575 for 2020. Note that this is not the rate that can be deducted from your personal taxes. The NCC adopted the use of the prevailing 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.

I will continue to use the \$27 amount to calculate VV hours during 2020.

I was out of town for several weeks and did not send a reminder to members to submit VV hours for this report. I will send a notice soon and will advise members that they should report hours from January 1, 2020.

Problems:

None at this time

Attachment D
Secretary's Report

EC Meeting Minutes
February 2, 2020, 10:00am
New York City, NY

Called to order 10:06am

Present: T. Engel, B. Simmons, M. Berger, B. Folsom, W. Russell, J. Morris-Siegel

1) Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy (MHLC) and Hollyhock Hollow

Engel stopped in to see Mark King (Executive Director of MHLC) for a couple of reasons. He revealed that as of last Friday, they took ownership of Hollyhock Hollow - formerly the property of Robert Reno, and then of the NY Audubon Society after Reno died. One of their buildings was damaged, and then they largely were absentees. The property is essentially all limestone, and there are a couple caves (at least 5 of which are known to be enterable). This area is in the Helderberg Limestone. A cave Engel was involved with digging open in the '90s goes down 35 feet and fills up with water and floods out - there's an overflow spring with a lot of water (Rubin thinks it handles a 3.5 square mile drainage area). MHLC doesn't have individual Preserve Managers for their preserves; they instead have a single Chief Steward who oversees all the preserves. This job tends to burn out people. They asked Engel to help write a Management Plan, and he thinks that if we offered to help manage it, they might take us up on the offer. The surface contains mostly hiking trails (a few miles worth of them), and someone would need to walk them 4-5 times a year. The land gets a lot of use for hiking, but there were numerous complaints about it when Audubon owned it (mainly that the land wasn't being taken care of). The damaged (flooded) building is below the level of the parking lot. There's a second building which has two big rooms and an upstairs area. Engel thinks MHLC would be receptive to our assistance, certainly with the management plan. The land covers approximately 130 acres. Engel notes that there's a small cave (Wiltsie's) on the adjacent property which was mapped by Kastning; he wonders if there's a possibility of us getting a subdivision of that land to acquire the cave. Berger suggests that an alternative might be a lot line adjustment so that cave could join the Hollyhock property. Engel gave MHLC some documents, maps, etc.

2) NRO

Morris-Siegel has been talking with V. Sassu-Laviero. He sent a couple e-mails out to the Board looking for input and volunteers and heard mostly crickets. He points out that the Board voted to host the event, and it's not that far away. Sassu-Laviero was going to contact various locations - the Cobleskill Fairgrounds, maybe the Harley Rendezvous location. Berger will deal with insurance once we find out the requirements. Engel thinks Davis might know who to contact at the Fairgrounds (challenges there include significant insurance requirements and coexisting with the horses). As for meals, Folsom notes that last time we hosted, the NCC handled dinner (we had a medieval theme - meat pasties, etc.). Morris-Siegel wonders if grottos would possibly run the meals and donate the profits to the Conservancy. Folsom notes that if Moore agrees to handle breakfasts, meals might be basically taken care of (however, it's graduation week at his school, and he likely won't be available). Folsom also mentioned that we might ask T. Kinsky and D. Crusoe about interest in running a breakfast (Crusoe has recently returned to the area). Berger noted that the lack of response to e-mail is likely simply due to the "group responsibility" problem. We identified the contact info for the Schoharie County Sunshine Fair, and Engel told us of another campground on the back road between Cobleskill and Middleburgh, called Twin Oaks (this is where we once had "NRSnow"). There's also a campground off Route 22 south of exit B3, not far from Indian Oven on Middle Road. We might be able to have trips to Snort Ridge if we can get permission - Woodland Hills Campground. Finally, we reminded ourselves that this is a fundraiser for the Traino Preserve, and we should have special trips running there, and that we may also be able to have trips to the Hollyhock Hollow MHLC property (see item #1).

3) Alan Traino Karst Preserve press release

Something needs to be done about this, whether it's massaging what's up on the website already, or putting out an interim visitation policy covering parking, etc. It sounds like Palange is amenable to visitors using the old road/driveway on his land with notice. We should contact Hedges about this topic. Berger noted that the Boston Grotto visited recently, was allowed to use that parking strip, and repaid the favor by helping to shovel his driveway. With the next newsletter issue coming up, there are a number of things we need to get in it, including an article about this. Simmons has a photo of the closing with Palange. Should we send a press release to Hay? Engel has mixed feelings about press releases - we should be more concerned about the caver population than the general population being aware of this acquisition (and it's easier to fundraise from cavers, too). To date, we've raised \$10,627.60 out of the \$26,282 cost. The tax-exempt paperwork is ready to go in.

4) Northern Long-Eared Bat update

The US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) was sued by the Center for Biological Diversity for listing the NLEB as only threatened and not endangered. A federal court has ruled in favor of the CBD, saying that the USFWS violated its rules and the law in making the determination that it should be listed as threatened. The court has remanded the determination of the bat's listing status to the

USFWS for reconsideration. It's unclear whether there will be an appeal, but at the end of the appeals chain, it seems likely that the USFWS will end up having to decide to change the listing to federally endangered, as the ruling makes it seem unlikely the agency could satisfactorily justify leaving it as threatened. However, this won't have any practical consequences that affect us, as per Carl Herzog of the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, the NYSDEC chooses to interpret and treat threatened and endangered species the same.

5) E-voting protocols

We discussed what occurred during the recent motion and vote conducted electronically. Simmons had sent out the motion in an attempt to help Berger who was at the time drowning under a number of other tasks. He didn't include the usual admonitions about refraining from casting votes until the discussion period had ended, and people began trying to vote before a Board member presented a question. In the e-mail thread, Berger eventually caught up and chimed in to remind us that this isn't how we conduct e-votes, because it marginalizes concerns Board members may wish to discuss and prevents the discussion our bylaws require us to foster if an electronic vote must be conducted urgently. At the EC meeting, Berger expressed confusion and frustration over how we as a group seem to always forget the standard rules we established and have been working with for e-votes for the past couple of years. We reviewed those rules, and concluded that they meet the dual needs of expedient votes on urgent topics and meaningful discussion that doesn't cause questions or objections to be moot due to already-cast votes. We should remind everyone of these rules, now and each time we need to vote electronically. For reference, here is the procedure (which was published in the Secretary Report in Attachment D of the March 2018 Board Meeting minutes, along with a note that we had invited discussion about it in Committee of the Whole, but at the time, no Board members sought to discuss any alterations):

- 1) By default, once a motion for electronic vote has been seconded, we'll start taking votes one week (7 days) from that point.
- 2) If the discussion stops for an entire calendar day before that point, we'll infer that the discussion has finished and can start taking votes the following day.
- 3) Before either of those the above happens, if anyone asks us to hold off on starting to vote for some reason, we'll generally postpone it as requested.
- 4) Once we start taking votes (the Secretary will let you know when we're beginning), as per the bylaws, you have up to two weeks (14 days) to send yours in, though it would be great if it didn't actually take that long to collect all the votes and tally the results for the sake of expedience (but do, of course, take however much of that time you need to consider the topic carefully).

6) Acquisitions update

Salamander: There are not many irons in the fire right now. We got approval from the Kingston Planning Board for our piece of property (they required some specific verbiage to be added to the maps). Closing will be scheduled soon. Simmons had a nice meeting with Greg from KLT, and their Executive Director was there, too. One of the KLT Board members who was also at the Planning Board meeting was very enthusiastic about working with us to share access to our adjacent properties, and used to be an NSS member - this seems like a good match. The ball is back in their court because Simmons was too busy to take the first stab at drafting an access/sharing agreement. Tree Cave is on the quarry property, and there may be another fracture cave in the back with bats in it. There's also the issue of parking. KLT owns the property now - their closing happened. They don't need money from us until the agreement is hashed out. We still want to get in touch with the railroad to ask about putting a trail down on that side of our property.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Vermont Land Trust: Youngbaer and Simmons had a meeting with VLT and discussed the possibility of a Memorandum of Understanding between our organizations. They obtained a copy of the NSS's MoU with the Land Trust of Northern Alabama, and plan to rework that so that we become part of VLT's acquisitions process when they're dealing with karst.

[REDACTED]

7) International Year of Caves and Karst 2021

No progress has yet been made on this topic. Berger still plans to get us registered

8) Preserve manager advertisements

We need to advertise for the permanent Traino Preserve Manager, an assistant at Onesquethaw, another at Bentleys (Hedges is willing to do whatever we need until someone else steps up), and perhaps Salamander.

9) Board elections and candidates

Simmons talked with Berg, who will be getting out an ad for candidates. He was told by Chu that he won't be running again (though is still willing to do other things).

10) Draft letter to Stanton Farms (re: Onesquethaw)

Engel provided us with a draft of the letter he plans to send to Stanton indicating that we don't want our land farmed. Folsom thinks it's spot on in content and tone. Simmons asks if the letter should offer an opportunity to meet and discuss.

11) Reminder about our NCKMS papers' extended deadline

Berger reminded us that the deadline to submit papers for the proceedings got pushed out, and is coming up this month.

12) Update on remaining question about Volunteer Accident Policy

Berger reported that he'd discussed with our insurance company the one major question he mentioned to the Board in December was a possible sticking point about the value of the policy. Believe it or not, this question centered around the capitalization or lack thereof of the word "loss" in one spot in the policy document. He's received a satisfactory answer in writing stating that the proper interpretation is what we were hoping for.

13) Updates on how the conversation with DARPA about the SubT Challenge is going

Engel doesn't believe that the DARPA representative attended the DEC bat count to see Clarksville, though they were invited.

14) Members Day (keeping it on our radar)

Simmons hasn't thought too much about this yet. Engel points out that if we want to hold it at Palange's property (neighbor to the Traino Preserve), we probably need to say something soon. Engel could talk with the Trions (further down the road) as well - they have a neat cave on their property. We have to get our infrastructure up at the Traino Preserve anyway. Engel suggests that an April work day to work on that might be a good topic for the next Board meeting; we should ask Hedges before then.

15) NYSCPP project update (cameras, or in general)

Simmons says that the game cameras were placed, and he's been monitoring the ones out at Clarksville. They haven't made a dent in either the batteries or flash storage yet. Berger noted that sometimes battery charge reports with inexpensive equipment are deceptive because the charge doesn't decrease linearly - it looks fairly flat until it exponentially drops off when the battery dies. Engel informed us that Rubin says he smiled at all the cameras. Hatfield and Schwartz have put up the acoustic monitors at the three Clarksville locations and at the Onesquethaw site. Simmons encountered a person with a metal detector on Crookes's land who asked if he can use it on our land. Our policies don't specifically forbid that, and Engel sort of seems okay with it. He wondered if we should get some sort of project proposal - everyone else stated there's no realistic way that was going to happen. This person mentioned that he knows other people with sinkholes along 301 and offered to walk around with us. Ingalls renewed the Kaleidoscope software license. She was presenting a talk about the project at NEBWG. Folsom says Warner put pictures up on Facebook; we should get them in the newsletter.

16) LANDSCAPE (land conservation software)

Morris-Siegel reported that he's tried it out, and setting it up is a lot of work. We'll discuss at the next Board meeting.

17) Grant application updates (Salamander & Traino)

Simmons says we've applied for both transaction grants. We think they're usually awarded in April, and recipients usually hear back about them in February or March.

18) Ella & Knox survey filing status update

Engel has been otherwise occupied, but will make a point of checking.

19) Reminder that Certificate of Merit stuff has to be ready for the March Board meeting

We were so reminded.

20) Reminder about building an Advisory Board

We were reminded about this as well.

21) Update on Addis press release

The time for this may have passed.

22) Update on Engel's Cave Protection Law endeavor

Engel hasn't heard back from the legislature yet. Currently they're in the middle of Budget work, so nothing will likely happen until after April 1. He'll e-mail them a reminder about the cave law.

23) New York LTA conference

Engel ended up in the hospital around the time of the previous exchange with the conference organizers about the field trip we wanted to offer. In the interim, they seem to have decided that they're going to offer three symposia instead of field trips. Running our proposed field trip would've been hard anyhow because of the time limit and the distance. This event should have an NCC presence, and we tried to figure out who might attend. Engel notes that we're weird because most other organizations actively want to attract people to their preserves, but we don't. Berger notes that this isn't uniformly true - we and the NSS do actively invite the public to some places (Merlins through our partnership with the Columbia Land Conservancy, and Sellecks and McFails when people ask about hiking trails at our preserves). Berger believes the more striking difference between us and other land trusts is that we own only fee land to date. Simmons hasn't committed to attending yet. Folsom says he could go. Simmons wonders if we should present a talk, but Berger and Folsom explained from what they experienced attending this event in a prior year that it's pretty hard to get topics accepted there - there are very few sessions with just a few tracks, and the topics are fairly heavily geared towards LTA goals, unlike something like NCKMS where pretty much anyone who wants to present something reasonable can.

24) NCC stationery

Folsom mentioned that he has some documents ready to mail to the town to get the Traino Preserve off the tax rolls, and wonders if we should have envelopes or something (he doesn't have a printer at home). Simmons and Engel say that having organization stationery is an antiquated concept.

25) NSF contract - Engel's brother to review

Folsom will send e-mail to Engel to remind him to bring this up when they have dinner next weekend. Berger noted that he's about to enter negotiations with the NSF for another organization.

End: 1:26pm