

Minutes

December 6, 2020 10:00 AM

Online via Videoconference

Meeting called to order at 10:07am

1. Introduction and greetings – Robert Simmons

2. Attendance

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

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

3. Absent with proxy: None

4. Absent without designated proxy: None

5. Nominating Committee Report: See “Nominating” subsection of Attachment A

6. Simmons moves to convene a meeting of the Trustees to hold elections for the officer positions with terms that expire this year (Vice President and Treasurer). Morris-Siegel will preside over the meeting as Chairman of the Trustees and will report.

The Trustees may decide to go into Executive Session. Officers and visitors may be asked to remain in a different room.

Second by Armen

For: All Trustees

[Motion passes - Trustees go into special session at 10:19am and exit special session at 10:26am.]

Morris-Siegel reports:

Trustees’ Report: Vice President: T. Engel (2 year term)

Treasurer: B. Folsom (2 year term)

Hedges also notes that the Governance Committee will work on interfacing with the Nominating Committee and on officer succession plans.

Officers are seated and the meeting resumes at 10:27am.

7. Officers’ Reports

President: Attachment A

Vice President: Attachment B

Treasurer: Attachment C

Secretary: Attachment D

8. 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:

8.1. 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.*]

Simmons reports that things are basically status quo - he checked in with our contacts two weeks ago, and there was still no word about whether there will be funding for a round of grants this coming year, nor about when an announcement may be made and funds may be released for the grant for the Traino Preserve acquisition. Berger asks whether there’s a “drop-dead” date by which if the program hasn’t been announced for the coming year, it won’t be able to happen until the following year. Simmons says that they haven’t answered that question, but ordinarily if there were going to be a round of grants this coming year, final applications would be due approximately 1.5 weeks from right now. When we’re next able to apply, we will probably be requesting a larger amount for the Salamander acquisition than we did during last year’s cycle.

Ingalls shifts to the grant we received for the large scientific study, and asks where the acoustic data collected last winter currently resides (referring to the limited collection done for a second year at the entrances to

Clarksville and Onesquethaw Caves). Hatfield says that the SD cards were handed off to Warner and Davis, and there was some surprise that after archiving it for backup, that data hadn't made its way to Ingalls yet. The reason for the question is that our license for the Kaleidoscope analysis software will run out on the 26th of this month. Folsom was under the impression that we had to carry out the analysis, and so would need to keep the software licensed. Berger explained that as the three-year proposal was originally laid out, the acoustic data analysis (and the funding to compensate Ingalls as the contracted scientist) was planned for the second year of the project - which is the year we're waiting for an opportunity to apply for when a grant round happens. However, the plan for the first year included some analysis of the light monitoring data, which the equipment failed to capture acceptably, and so as Simmons explains, some of the acoustic analysis originally planned for year 2 was done on a voluntary basis during the first year because that data was available. Simmons will contact Warner and Davis to expedite getting the data to Ingalls. It was asked how much an annual license for the software costs; Ingalls recalled it being in the neighborhood of \$300, and Folsom thinks it was closer to \$400.

8.2. Bentleys Cave Preserve Management Plan review (Hedges)

[This is the periodic review of this preserve's management plan; proposed updates from the Managers are included in the meeting materials, and will be voted on in agenda item 11 below.]

Hedges explains that most of the revisions in the proposed document are simply formatting, but that a note about the 2020 bat survey at the cave has been added, as well as a note about the Atwood plastic, but nothing that is particularly actionable has been changed. He also states that he had the opportunity to speak with Randy Bentley at the NCC's 40th Anniversary Dinner, and there are currently no concerns related to logging. Morris-Siegel caught a typo to be corrected. Engel noted that the Atwood plastic is on our neighbor's land and asked why it's mentioned in this plan since it's not on our land; Hedges agreed that it could be removed. Simmons suggested that we might make a neighborly offer to help clean it out. Engel was also curious who identified the cave cricket in the cave, but it predates Hedges's time, so we don't know the answer. The phrasing of the note about the prevalence of porcupine droppings in the upper entrance of the cave also struck Engel as odd, and Hedges agreed that it would be better if reworded. Rubin asked about including a map in the plan, and Berger explained that the topic of maps in management plans had come up in a Board discussion in the past year, and we had decided that because the maps are largely static resources and not plans, and have a home as an easily accessible item not buried behind pages of text on the website for visitors to retrieve, they shouldn't be part of the management plans. Engel adds that it may make sense to include a map in the first revision of a plan when a preserve is new, but that after that, the website seems like the right home for the maps.

8.3. 2021 Budget discussion (Folsom)

[Our 2021 budget needs to be approved at the December meeting. The Treasurer has provided a proposed budget in Attachment C, and it will be voted on in agenda item 12 below.]

Somewhat amazingly, nobody had any questions or anything to discuss whatsoever about the proposed budget.

8.4. Positions needing to be filled (Simmons)

[As noted in the President's Report in Attachment A, we are in need of a representative in Vermont, a new Membership Chair, a new Investment Management Committee Chair, and a Fundraising Chair. We can discuss advertising and recruiting efforts in this topic.]

Simmons reported that we are making good progress finding volunteers for the various open positions. Riley Drake has volunteered to take on the role of Membership Chair, and a motion for appointment will be added to New Business for that. Joe Levinson is close to agreeing to move into the Investment Management Committee role, and will be speaking with Folsom about expectations. Hatfield has stated that she's willing to help out with the Fundraising Committee, and perhaps to co-Chair it, but does not think she wants to be a sole Chair. Erik Nieman and Tony Vasile have expressed the desire to manage the Sellecks Preserve, and there is a motion on the agenda for that appointment. We do not yet have someone eager to take on the Vermont representative position, and Simmons plans to try to make it to one of the Vermont Cavers Association's (VCA) upcoming events to try to drum up interest.

8.5. NSS Landowner Relations Network Committee (LRNC) looking for awardees in each state (Folsom)

[Julie Schenck-Brown posted a note to Facebook that the NSS LRNC wants to recognize a landowner in each state; we may be well-positioned to make some suggestions for New York.]

Folsom explains that he was just the messenger passing along this note to us. Simmons points out that this is largely an internal National Speleological Society (NSS) program, and that it might not really be the place of the NCC to be nominating candidates, and suggests that perhaps the Northeastern Regional Organization (NRO) Chair should raise this topic with that group. Berger (currently NRO Chair), somehow while taking minutes, made an attempt at deflecting the topic back to the NCC by pointing out that while the Region certainly could discuss this and make suggestions (if the pandemic weren't causing all of its events to be canceled), the Conservancy is the

regional conservation organization that most often interacts with landowners and cultivates relationships with them in the course of acquisition and stewardship work, and may well be in the best position to know which karst landowners in our area are most deserving of and would react best to this sort of recognition. He also notes that his understanding is that, unlike many of the NSS's awards that recognize lifetime achievements of one sort or another, the LRNC's awards are meant to reach a much broader set of landowners to help build and bolster good relationships with them.

8.6. Followup on odd bat behavior report at Knox Cave (Berger)

[Following the report we received about a bat landing on and scratching a visitor shortly before the cave closed for hibernation, we had a discussion with the DEC about the event.]

See Item 15 in the EC Minutes in Attachment D for discussion; Berger read the reply that he received from C. Herzog at this meeting as well. The short summary is that the observed behavior isn't actually out-of-line with normal underground bat behavior, although it's not usually observed by folks who don't carry out excessive amounts of work around bats, but that the New York State Department of Health considers any skin-to-skin contact to be an exposure, even absent an evident bite, and so obtaining a prophylactic rabies shot after an event like this was the appropriate course of action. This event also reinforces the reason it's important for cavers to be properly attired for our caves, with no skin except their face exposed. There are no recommended alterations to our management practices for the cave that have come out of the discussion.

8.7 [REDACTED] (Engel)

Engel expressed uncertainty why this was on the list of topics, but described [REDACTED]. Berger explained that it's on the topic list because the EC Meeting discussion about it ended with a comment that perhaps it should be discussed at Committee of the Whole. He also notes that thoughts about [REDACTED] tie into the topic of becoming a bigger organization, and that there was some substantial discussion about that at the EC Meeting, which seems like it would be unfortunate for the Board to move on without considering. Hedges notes that we've discussed [REDACTED] before (such as when we've discussed [REDACTED]), and that he feels this is a cart-and-horse issue in that we're not a larger organization, and so [REDACTED]. At this point, the Committee of the Whole moved on to the next topic. However, several Board members were typing notes back and forth about this in the chat, resulting in Item 8.12 being added to the topic list so that we could avoid being distracted from the live discussion by the typed side conversation.

8.8. NCC Virtual Bonfire event (Simmons)

[We've been unable to hold many of the in-person events we'd planned to this year - our annual Members' Day, the Northeastern Regional Organization (NRO) Spring meeting we were going to host, the Barn Dance - and had concluded that just virtualizing these events was a great idea... until 5 months into the pandemic, everyone was sick and tired of virtual events. However, the world still isn't back to normal, and we're losing touch with some of our membership by having no events. See discussion in Item 21 of the EC Minutes in Attachment D.]

Simmons wants to hold some open sessions for anyone who wants to attend so that people can find out what we're up to, ask questions, and socialize a bit. The first one he's considering would be a week from today, on December 13th at around 6pm. Perhaps there'll be a video of a campfire on loop or somesuch. He'll start advertising for it. Morris-Siegel thinks this is a good idea. Simmons also thinks it important to start doing things like this because he's fairly skeptical about whether we'll be able to have a number of the traditional events in 2021 because of the expected timeline for immunizations to be widely available and distributed.

8.9. NCC / Kingston Land Trust (KLT) arrangement at Salamander (Simmons)

[Now that we own Salamander, it's time to move forward with this arrangement. We can discuss progress here - see also Item 13 in the EC Minutes in Attachment D.]

Simmons mentions that he was actually invited to a workday on the KLT property that's going on today; obviously he's not there due to our meeting, but C. Gentry is attending. He plans to meet with KLT representatives next week, and has gotten some easement examples from our lawyer - it seems like the "common driveway" model is probably closest to what we're looking for, although none of the examples perfectly fits our situation at these neighboring properties. Morris-Siegel asks if we'd be looking at granting mutual easements to each other on the properties for trails, and Simmons does think that's likely to be the direction this goes, since KLT would like to build a loop trail that will run across a bunch of our property. We would benefit greatly from this arrangement, likely more so than KLT, as we'll end up having use of the parking area that's on their land, while ours doesn't have parking to offer. In the future, it's also possible we'd move on to granting mutual conservation easements (and not just trail easements) to further protect each of the properties from development and similar risks - ordinarily we've had trouble pursuing protecting our land with conservation easements because organizations that might hold such

easements typically want a considerable amount of money for the resources they'd need to commit to monitoring and enforcing an easement. However, a trade of conservation easements between neighboring land trusts might be possible to arrange without financial cost, and might also be provide the opportunity for a good first conservation easement for the NCC to manage.

8.10. Website updates (Engel)

[This item likely has to do with communication about winter closures, based on external context, but did not come with an explicit explanation.]

Engel explains that he's raised this topic to ask about getting up-to-date management plans and preserve info up on the website - he's noticed that there's still nothing about the Traino or Salamander Preserves posted, and feels that perhaps we need a plan for how we get from an acquisition to having relevant info available on the website. Armen notes that he's requested various management plans from Managers, but often doesn't hear back when he does. Hedges notes that the ease of posting a good preserve page sometimes differs based on how we came about acquiring a preserve - specifically, work on the Traino Preserve has been delayed by the pandemic and we hadn't been expecting to acquire it until Traino's untimely passing (at which point, there was a rush to complete the acquisition); the Salamander Preserve is likely in a better position to have pages posted about it faster. Engel notes that many of the difficulties we have with info on our website (getting a preserve page up, info on our masthead, dates and hours when visitation's allowed, indication of how Special Use works, etc.) are not unique to us, and are also challenges experienced by the NSS website's preserves area.

8.11. Surprise Cave (Berger)

[While speaking with C. Herzog about a different topic, the project he and the DEC have been interested in pursuing with our help as the stewardship partners for that cave came up, and it sounds like the ball is in our court to jumpstart progress.]

Berger recounted a brief history of how the NCC became involved as the DEC's stewardship partner organization at Surprise Cave, and how a change in regional leadership at the DEC opened an opportunity for Herzog to become more involved and for the NCC's role to become less ceremonial and involve more actual conservation work. Herzog is interested in pursuing a project largely suggested by Simmons in which the historical entrance might be located and reopened in an attempt to cool the temperature of the cave in order to return it to its status as a suitable bat habitat during the hibernation season, but has been experiencing some difficulty getting the project off the ground with us.

Simmons explains that he had been trying to gear up to get this project started last year, but that the pandemic delayed several plans (site visits, introductions with the neighboring private landowner who owns the historical entrance, etc. would be involved). He says that the DEC has funding to replace the old and troublesome gate with a modern bat-friendly gate, and that he had taken Jim (Crash) Kennedy to the site a couple years ago to plan for the project. This effort would involve a bunch of volunteer gruntwork which the NCC could provide (much of it involves getting materials and tools up to the entrance for construction). Simmons has also maintained a relationship with the Janescos (the neighboring landowners), under whose land much of the cave runs, and on whose land the historical entrance lies. On a trip that A. DeMaria took with some of the Surprise Cave "old-timers," they were able to find the old entrance on the opposite side of the streambed from the state land where the current entrance lies. Simmons had discussed with the Janescos the plan to consider reopening and gating the old entrance. The impact of this project, if successful, could be quite significant, as the bat counts in the cave are now in the single digits, where they had been between 4k and 5k in the old days (admittedly, pre-WNS). DEC Region 3 and Herzog know that most of the folks familiar with the cave are no longer able to go on the sort of trips that getting to and working in the cave require, and that in order to work on projects in this cave, it's necessary to involve the younger generation. In the short term, this would likely involve exploring and digging, and in the longer term, that could potentially move on to helping with management of the cave. Simmons agrees that he'll need to work with DeMaria to advance to a more active project from the maintenance mode we were in at the time he became Chair of the committee. Berger notes that when he participated in a rescue pre-planning exercise at the cave, much of the group that attended was the active New Jersey Initial Response Team (NJIRT) crew, and that if we're looking for active younger-generation cavers close enough to the area to help with the upcoming work, NJIRT might be one of the right groups to approach. He asked whether he should bring this up at one of their meetings, and Simmons indicated that this would be a good idea.

8.12. Growth and becoming a bigger organization (Berger / Hatfield)

[This item was added during the meeting because Berger had expected Item 8.7 to include discussion of this broader topic, but it ended without doing so, and side conversation in the meeting chat made it evident that multiple people wanted to discuss it, at least briefly.]

Hatfield inquired what purposes a conservancy might have for physical building structures on their property. Berger indicated that there are various different use cases for buildings, and that to some extent which use case(s) a group is targeting determine which locations and buildings would be most suitable - as examples, buildings

could be used for storage, for a working office, for a public visitor center or educational space, for events, etc. As for the immense costs associated with making the leap to becoming a bigger organization, he also notes that there are grant programs available to provide a bridge to help get from here to there, and that, for example, the Southeastern Cave Conservancy, Inc. (SCCi) has used such grants to help hire paid staff for certain roles; if we moved in the direction of hiring an Executive Director, we could try to do so with a similar grant. Hedges notes that SCCi is in a rather different situation because of the density of caves and cavers in their region, and that this allows them to be a large organization much more easily than we could. Berger points out that cave and caver density don't alone determine the size or course of a conservancy - for example, he contends that the Greenbrier County area of West Virginia has comparable cave/caver density to much of the TAG region, and its regional conservancy is a smaller organization structured somewhat similarly to ours, but that in terms of the span of our region and the number of preserves we manage and are likely to manage in the near term, we're between these two examples. While he doesn't necessarily think the time to make the leap to being a bigger organization is now, he does think we haven't done enough serious thinking about how to identify when we've reached that point. Hatfield notes that at the Land Trust Alliance (LTA) New York virtual conference she attended this year, there were some great presentations related to this - figuring out what your strategic plan is, and she thinks it would probably be a good idea for us to have something like a five-year plan. She volunteers to work on some sort of virtual retreat at some point, if that's the direction we end up going in to discuss this further. It was also mentioned that we might want to poll the membership about the direction they'd like to see the Conservancy take. Berger reminds us that Youngbaer in fact did conduct a thorough membership survey a few years back that included questions such as whether the membership felt that we should be seeking to hire an Executive Director, and that this solicitation was fairly successful at obtaining some detailed feedback; it was years ago, and the time might be right to go through the exercise again. Cantello suggested that at the upcoming fireside chats, we get out the ideas we're discussing here to see what people think, since polling the entire membership could involve a lot of work.

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

Second by Ingalls

For: All

[The Committee of the Whole is closed]

[Dumont departed for another commitment at this point.]

Old Business

[None]

New Business

10. Simmons moves: The Board shall enter Executive Session to discuss a pending potential real estate transaction.

Second by Morris-Siegel

For: All

[Motion passes - the Board enters Executive Session at 12:40pm and exits Executive Session at 1:18pm]

11. Berger moves: The minutes of the September 20, 2020 Board Meeting are approved.

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

Second by Folsom

For: All

[The minutes of the September 20, 2020 Board Meeting are approved]

12. Hedges moves: The revisions to the Bentleys Cave Preserve Management Plan, as amended during Committee of the Whole, are approved.

Second by Morris-Siegel

For: All

[The revisions to the Bentleys Cave Preserve Management Plan are approved]

13. Folsom moves: The NCC budget for 2021, as presented in Attachment C and amended during Committee of the Whole and during Executive Session, is approved.

Second by Berger

For: All

[The NCC budget for 2021 is approved]

14. Berger moves: Act 21-60 (Writing A Cave Management Plan, currently Appendix E in the NCC Board Manual) is amended by altering the following two sentences as indicated:

1) "Periodic reviews keep this process going and that is why the NCC requires that each cave preserve manager review his or her management plan ~~every three years~~ on a rotational basis established by the NCC Secretary and report recommended changes to the Board for their consideration as amendments to the plan."

2) "~~Every two years~~ **Before each regular Board meeting (except those at which time is reserved for review of another aspect of the Conservancy)**, the NCC Secretary reminds one Preserve's Managers that their management plan is due for review and that the Preserve Managers must prepare a report for the Board containing their suggestions for revision if they have any."

[Our number of preserves had outgrown our current Management Plan review frequency without doubling-up, and will likely and hopefully continue to do so if we simply change to a different number. See discussion of this topic in Item 16 of the EC Minutes in Attachment D.]

Second by Drake

For: All

[Act 21-60 (Writing A Cave Management Plan) is amended as described above]

15. Simmons moves: The Salamander Cave Preserve Committee is established.

Second by Berger

For: All

[The Salamander Cave Preserve Committee is established]

16. Simmons moves: Cara Gentry and Erik Richards are appointed as Co-Chairpersons of the Salamander Cave Preserve Committee.

[Cara and Erik were instrumental in getting the cave donated to the NCC and have volunteered to take on the day-to-day management role. They live within two miles of the facility and are also well-known locally.]

Second by Engel

For: All

[Cara Gentry and Erik Richards are appointed as Co-Chairpersons of the Salamander Cave Preserve Committee]

17. Simmons moves: The NCC accepts the quote provided by Charles Hite Professional Land Surveyor for \$1,285 and shall engage them to place monuments at the Traino Preserve property corners, update the survey accordingly, and prepare copies for filing at the Office of the Albany County Clerk.

[As many are aware, the local farmer planted corn on a portion of our property this year. The existing survey was done by Charles Hite for the Palanges for their lot line adjustment and subsequent subdivision to allow the purchase of the property by the NCC but was not monumented at that time.]

Second by Hedges

Morris-Siegel suggests that posts made from pressure-treated wood easily available at Home Depot can be used to mark the boundaries once surveyor pins are placed.

For: All

[The quote provided by Charles Hite Professional Land Surveyor is accepted for the described survey work]

18. Simmons moves: The NCC accepts the quote provided by C. T. Male Associates for \$1,960 and shall engage them to place monuments at the Knox Cave Preserve property corners for the piece of land that extends from the preserve proper northerly out to Middle Road, update the survey accordingly, and prepare copies for filing at the Office of the Albany County Clerk.

[When the Knox Survey was completed in 2016, this section was not monumented, as was the rest of the preserve. This section extends up through lands of the Busch family, and it may have been considered expedient at that time to not further inflame the situation. Prior to authorizing this work, I would approach the Busches to discuss that we are doing this at many of our preserves where it had not been previously completed.]

Second by Berger

Simmons explains that we have finally learned that while Engel did file the survey which will be updated as part of this work at the same time he filed the Onesquethaw survey, the reason the County Clerk did not show the Knox survey as having ever been filed is that their office had a data entry error which resulted in all searchable field data which would have been used to look up the survey being completely blank. Fortunately, there were only two surveys filed on the day in question - the Onesquethaw and Knox surveys - so they were able to finally find it, and have corrected the errantly blank fields so that it can now be found easily.

For: All

[The quote provided by C. T. Male Associates is accepted for the described survey work]

19. Simmons moves: Erik Nieman and Tony Vasile are appointed Co-Chairpersons of the Sellecks Cave Preserve Committee.

[Erik has expressed a strong interest in the Preserve Manager position and has been ably acting as the interim Manager until this seat is filled. Tony Vasile was recommended to us by outgoing Manager Joey O'Reilly and is eager to work with us.]

Second by Hedges

For: Rest

Abstain: Nieman

[Erik Nieman and Tony Vasile are appointed Co-Chairpersons of the Sellecks Cave Preserve Committee]

20. Simmons moves: The NCC thanks Peter Youngbaer for his years of service to the Conservancy, including most recently as our Membership Chair.

[Peter has done an amazing job for the NCC for many years and we wish him all the best. He is leaving a big hole in our organization which will be difficult to fill.]

Second by Folsom

For: All

[Peter Youngbaer has the NCC's thanks for his years of service to the Conservancy]

21. Simmons moves: Riley Drake is appointed Chairperson of the Membership Committee.

Second by Morris-Siegel

For: Rest

Abstain: Drake

[Riley Drake is appointed Chairperson of the Membership Committee]

Informational point: Next EC meeting will be Sunday, February 7, 2021 at 10AM, probably on-line.

Informational point: the Spring Board meeting will be Sunday, March 7, 2021 at 10 AM, maybe at HRP Associates in a very large room.

Informational point: the late Spring EC meeting will be April 25, 2021 at 10AM, on-line.

22. Simmons moves: The NCC Summer meeting will be Sunday, June 6, 2021 at 10am, likely on-line.

Second by Engel

For: All

[The NCC Summer meeting will be Sunday, June 6, 2021 at 10am, likely on-line]

23. Hatfield moves to adjourn.

Second by Ingalls

For: Rest

Against: Morris-Siegel

[The meeting is adjourned]

Meeting adjourned at 2:11pm

**Attachment A
President's Report**

1. Still no word on the NYSCPP Transaction Grant for the Traino Preserve purchase, [REDACTED] There have been no announcements of availability for a 2021 round for which we plan to submit for the Salamander donation.
2. I filed the final report for the human influences on caves grant in July. I intend to apply for the next part of the grant, which includes the actual data analysis assuming they announce a 2021 round again this fall.
3. One item of interest on the Acquisitions front, that will be discussed in Executive Session.
4. We have several openings that need to get filled:
 - a. Representative in Vermont to push forward several initiatives on a local basis.
 - b. New Manager for Selleck's Preserve (Erik Nieman and Tony Vitale have asked to be considered).
 - c. A New Membership Chair (Peter is stepping back at the end of the year, and Riley Drake has expressed interest).
 - d. Manager(s) for the new Salamander Cave Preserve (Cara Gentry and Eric Richards have asked to become the Managers)
 - e. As always, we are in dire need of a Fund-Raising Chair.
 - f. An Investment Management Committee Chair (Joe Levinson has expressed interest).
5. The proposed letter (with edits) was sent out to the individual concerned with the Bentleys Cave incursion last year. I have received no response yet. The group's Institutional Membership has been denied and their fee returned.
6. I have received access to the updated membership database and will use that to do a mailing to the membership discussing our progress and issues this year, opening, and our fundraising challenges with an appeal for end of year contributions.
7. At Bill's urging, I created a Facebook Fundraiser for the NCC for Giving Tuesday:
<https://www.facebook.com/donate/386492095801530/10157459779435653/>
 As of 11/28/20 there had been \$580 donated towards the \$500 goal. Since donations continued to come in, I raised the target to \$1k.
8. We need to schedule some winter activities that the volunteers and members can participate in. These would need to be socially distanced, acceptable outdoor projects where folks can travel to and get some outdoor work done or hiking in. I'll ask at the meeting for dates and venues for some simple work days for people, maybe something at Thacher Park and or the new preserves. Basically anything that can safely get us engaged with each other and the membership at large. I'm also going to have an open chat meeting that could be open to anyone, to just try to do some additional reach out. These would be on-line, kinda Q&A and shoot the breeze sessions.
9. I am planning to take this Friday, 12/11, off of work to spend some time traveling around with Porter to various properties.
10. I'm looking at holding our first Virtual Campfire event this coming Sunday.

Cave Preserve Management Plan Review Schedule

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

Note: No significant changes to the Bentleys management plan are proposed for this meeting. Please see attached draft plan changes for proposed additions/changes to the plan.

CAVE PRESERVE REPORTS:

1. Bensons (Luke Mazza)

Progress: Property was inspected on 10/10, and winter closure signs were placed at the cave entrances.

Problems: Nothing noted other than a need to replace the fading kiosk posters.

Plans: Will plan to refresh the kiosk signage in the spring.

2. Bentleys (Devon Hedges)

Here are the traffic details for 2020 through November 14:
 17 groups, 46+ people, 2-3 most common size, Largest was 7

Problems a few persistently wet areas along trail could use some steppingstones

Progress Preserve co-managers met, had a good visit to the property. Trails weed whacked a bit, downed wood moved or trimmed. Reviewed signage and drainage issues. Likely recovery of signage original files. Management plan revision

Plans Boundary marking in late winter. Improve by spring, early summer 2021: trails (corduroy, stones) driveway (broad based dip, water bar, additional stone), kiosk & signage

3. Clarksville (Thom Engel)

Nothing of import at Clarksville. DEC signs went up on October 1. Ellen Schwartz put a sign by Thook. New neighbor has posted his property line. Per my conversation with him this last weekend, I will likely do something just east of Ward entrance to assure that idiots who can't follow a trail stay off his property. He said a few times people have wandered through his property. (I would think his posted signs would have been enough but apparently not).

The "Cave Closed" sign was ripped down. It's been replaced.

4. Ella Armstrong (Erik Nieman)

Progress The preserve boundaries have been marked.

Issues One downed tree lying over the trail at the cave entrance. Two dead trees near entrance that could pose potential danger to somebody on the trail or near entrance, should they fall. If winter doesn't tip them over, will look into them in spring. Recent heavy rains have begun/continued eroding the soil north of the cave entrance. The appearance is that there is a new sinkhole forming. Upon closer inspection, it is merely topsoil being eroded and washed away.

Plans Remove fallen/dead trees. Observe erosion north of cave entrance.

5. Knox (Mitch Berger)

Progress: 13 permits were issued for the season (including one for Crossbones)

I was finally able to visit the preserve at the conclusion of the last day of the NCRC course; no problems were noted

The atypical bat encounter that happened in September was discussed with C. Herzog, and explained as not unheard of nor a sign that we need to alter our management policies.

Issues: The pandemic has continued to keep me away from the preserve with one exception above.

Scientific equipment was installed in the cave without permission due to confusion and miscommunication with the DEC. C. Herzog asked if we could discuss the situation as soon as he became aware that the installation hadn't actually been approved, and we had a pleasant conversation on 12/4. This relates to Item 18 in the EC Minutes in Attachment D, and Item 15 in the EC Minutes from August included as Attachment D to the September 2020 Board Minutes. As concluded in the EC minutes, lack of clarity created by not being careful about our communication channels is to blame here, and we need to fix them. The DEC did not intentionally do anything wrong, and asked what we'd like done to correct the misunderstanding. I told them that we didn't want to jeopardize the research, and given that the equipment is there and has been collecting data, at this point, they should proceed as if the research project had gone through the process and been approved.

The Great Divide rope is [presumably] still there.

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

Plans: Periodic property inspections, possibly by local volunteers.

Facilitate the winter bat count by the DEC.

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)

Progress Excerpted from John Dunham's upcoming article for the NECAver: With some hunting around, earlier this fall we located a 10ft section of 24' culvert on Craigslist, and Ramon Armen picked it up and delivered it to the preserve. Over two days in early November, Ramon, Jacob Morris-Siegel, Larry Bernier, and I hiked the culvert the mile up to the entrance, dug out the necessary material, and installed it in the hole. We had hoped to have more of a group activity and invite other cavers to help out and hang out on the surface, but with COVID cases spiking we decided to just get the entrance stabilized with the minimum number of people we could manage.

Although the Dome 12 entrance is a mile from the parking lot and up a steep hill, we were able to carry the culvert fairly easily by strapping saplings across one side and putting a person on each corner... The first day, we focused on clearing a large hanging rock

that we knew would block the installation, as well as removing fins on the hanging solid wall to allow a tighter fit... On the second day, we cleared and widened the hole, removing temporary rock retaining walls and lots of loose mud until we had good measurements on all diameters... Once in place, we carefully plugged all the spaces around the bottom of the culvert with rocks that wouldn't fit through (to avoid problems we've seen where the backfilling didn't ensure this, and the fill then started washing out into the cave).

By the end of the day, we had plugged the bottom several feet of the holes and backfilled a couple more. This will protect the entrance for this winter, and we plan on a future dig day to fill the remainder by work higher in the sinkhole to create steps and stability in the upper parts of the dig slope.

Plans See last paragraph of John Dunham's report. We plan to finish culvert installations and cap the culvert with plywood for the winter.

Problems None at this time.

7. Onesquethaw (Thom Engel)

Not much to report. There were four permits issued at the end of September for groups on Sept 21, 26, 27, & 28, The total # of individuals was 18.

Erik Nieman and I completed a surface survey to ascertain the locations of the 2 sinks in the field and the tiny swallet near to NW property line with respect to the rest of the cave. The results are attached.

8. Sellecks (Erik Nieman)

Problems Kiosk sign-in box is falling apart. Mouse nest inside. Contact information at kiosk is out of date. ie. Jason Siemion was listed as preserve manager with private email address. Recent large storm knocked down many trees at Levys Cave. They are blocking the trail and overlie the sinkhole and the cave entrance.

Plans Fix Kiosk. Update contact info for preserve. New informational poster? Clear trees

Progress Kiosk has been fixed. Mouse nest removed. Repairs have remedied the gaps that allowed mouse entry. Temporary sign with updated contact info placed at kiosk, along with a QR code that leads directly to the Sellecks Preserve page on the NCC website. (following Onesquethaw Preserve example). Trees blocking the trail have been cleared. Remaining tree-tops and branches in Levys Cave sinkhole remain to be cleared. Plan for that this coming spring.

9. Salamander (Bob Simmons)

Property closed on 10/21. Working up draft easement agreement to provide to KLT as a new point of discussion which incorporates the Board's previous comments on the draft access license agreement put forth by KLT. Will schedule a meeting with KLT staff immediately upon having it completed. Will need to update the Management Plan based on agreement particulars.

10. Spider (Kevin Dumont)

Nothing new to report

11. Traino Preserve (Devon Hedges)

Progress Helped scattering Alan's ashes
Directed survey project request from Boston Grotto to John Dunham, most recent survey contact
Got contact info for neighbor Stanton from Thom Engel

Problems Contacting neighbors Stanton hasn't happened yet
Planning and coordination of NCC benefit auction of Alan's trailer hasn't moved along much

Plans plan, construct/acquire kiosk & changing area
NCC benefit auction of remaining Traino digging equipment and supplies, gear, etc.
Complete updated survey & maps

OTHER COMMITTEES (PRESIDENT):

Acquisitions (Chuck Porter, Bob Simmons)

No specific projects are in the advanced stages at this point, several on-going discussions/etc. are noted below. Further, we do have a potential addition to one preserve that will be discussed in executive session.

Vermont Land Trust

Need a lead person to push ahead the MOU between organizations. A few names have been mentioned but I have not been able to contact anyone at this point. Plan to reach out to VCA membership for assistance; possibly attend their next meeting if it happens in a timely manner.

[Redacted text block]

Nominating (Norm Berg)

The request for candidates for positions of Vice President and Treasurer resulted in these submissions:

- Vice President: Thom Engel, currently the NCC Vice President
- Treasurer: Bill Folsom, currently the NCC Treasurer

The solicitation for Trustee candidates to be seated in June 2021 will begin in February 2021.

Risk Management (Mitch Berger)

Progress: Insurance coverage (G/L and Terrafirma) was added for Salamander when we closed.
Have finally received all required Conflict of Interest Disclosure forms for the year.
Completed the annual LTA risk management training course (required for Terrafirma discount eligibility).

Issues: Terrafirma was not paid for our addition of Salamander at the time of the addition; the Office has now mailed in payment, but it needs to be processed before we can apply for next year's coverage.

Plans: Work on our annual Terrafirma policy renewal application (application period opened December 1).
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, the Northwest Connecticut Land Conservancy (Formerly Weantinoge) had a nice article about the cave and bats in their most recent newsletter.

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

No report

Governance ad hoc (Devon Hedges)

No Report

**Attachment B
Vice President's Report**

Bylaws Committee (Joe Levinson)
Nothing to report.

Education (Thom Engel)
Nothing to report.

Science Committee (Larry Davis)
"There was no activity in the science area."
(Thom Engel) We may need to clarify the current policy on science projects. The process should be that the preserve manager or managers should be the first point of contact. The manager would then involve the Science Committee and the NCC President. They form, in essence, an ad hoc committee which makes the decision. I can't stress this enough: The preserve manager must be the first point of contact.
Paul Rubin submits the following information on his work in Clarksville:

- May 1, 2020 Hydrologic assessment both within Clarksville Cave and on the surface.
- Sept. 26, 2020 Assessed hydrologic factors throughout the Gregory section of Clarksville Cave.
- Sept. 28, 2020 Examined sediments in the Thook entry area.
- Oct. 1, 2020 Examined and classified Thook sediment samples and pebbles that were collected. Examination conducted in Tivoli, NY.
- Nov. 7, 2020 Conducted a surface elevational survey with Erik Nieman for geologic cross section construction.

Special Use (Thom Engel)
I am not going to do a big multi-page report as in years past. This year we had only 45 reservations for slots. Of these 33 were withdrawn before permit issuance. Of the 12 issued, only 6 were used. The other 6 were surrendered. Of the 6 permits used 4 were for NCRC training. An atypical year for sure.

Surprise Cave Committee (Al DeMaria)
Nothing to report.

Thacher Park (Thom Engel)
I will be applying to renew the permit. I do not envision any problems. Nothing was done this year due to the Covid-19 Pandemic

Cave Protection (Thom Engel)
No action. Will try again next session.

**Attachment C
Treasurer's Report**





Profit & Loss Budget vs. Actual as of 11/23/20

	<u>Approved FY19</u>	<u>Actual FY19</u>	<u>Approved FY20</u>	<u>Actual FY20 YTD</u>	<u>Proposed FY21</u>
Ordinary Income/Expense					
Income					
Donations					
Auction Donations	2,000.00	1,770.00	1,800.00	0.00	2,000.00
Donations - Other	9,670.00	19,376.29	7,741.00	5,629.93	10,553.00
Total Donations	11,670.00	21,146.29	9,541.00	5,629.93	12,553.00
Grants	1,500.00	0.00			
Interest Earned	15.00	472.97	10.00	47.77	25.00
Membership Income	2,930.00	3,460.00	2,700.00	2,525.00	2,700.00
Total Income	16,115.00	25,079.26	12,251.00	8,202.70	15,278.00
Expense					
Acquisitions	2,000.00	0.00	2,000.00	465.00	2,000.00
Bank Charges	75.00	74.34	75.00	62.24	75.00
Donations-outgoing	200.00	0.00	200.00	0.00	200.00
Dues	350.00	300.00	350.00	300.00	350.00
Education	50.00	0.00	50.00	0.00	50.00
Executive					
President	100.00	0.00	100.00	0.00	100.00
Secretary	50.00	0.00	50.00	0.00	50.00
Treasurer	50.00	49.65	50.00	0.00	50.00
VP	50.00	0.00	50.00	0.00	50.00
Total Executive	250.00	49.65	250.00	0.00	250.00
Grant Expense	1,500.00	303.66	0.00	3,599.00	0.00
Insurance	2,280.00	2,197.06	2,516.00	2,437.06	2,548.00
Legal Fees	1,000.00	0.00	1,000.00	2,454.50	1,000.00
Licenses & Permits	500.00	125.00	125.00	275.00	125.00
Meeting Expense	100.00	0.00	100.00	0.00	100.00
Meetings & Conferences	200.00	0.00	300.00	135.00	300.00
Membership Expenses	100.00	0.00	125.00	0.00	125.00
Miscellaneous	100.00	0.00	100.00	0.00	100.00
Office Expense	100.00	64.48	100.00	56.00	100.00
Postage	100.00	0.00	100.00	0.00	100.00
Preserves-Maintenance					
Bensons	250.00	0.00	310.00	0.00	200.00
Bentleys	100.00	0.00	160.00	0.00	200.00
Clarksville	100.00	0.00	160.00	0.00	100.00
Ella Armstrong	100.00	0.00	160.00	0.00	100.00
Knox	100.00	0.00	160.00	0.00	2,060.00
Merlins	100.00	0.00	460.00	0.00	100.00
Onesquethaw	50.00	0.00	110.00	0.00	50.00
Salamander					600.00
Sellecks	100.00	0.00	160.00	0.00	100.00
Spider	100.00	0.00	160.00	0.00	100.00

Traino			360.00	0.00	1,585.00
Total Preserves-Maintenance	1,000.00	0.00	2,200.00	0.00	5,195.00
Promotion	2,000.00	817.13	1,500.00	0.00	1,500.00
Publishing					
Mailings	50.00	0.00	50.00	0.00	50.00
Website	60.00	0.00	60.00	0.00	60.00
Total Publishing	110.00	0.00	110.00	0.00	110.00
Science	3,000.00	0.00	500.00	0.00	500.00
Sponsorships	800.00	250.00	250.00	0.00	250.00
Taxes on Properties	300.00	625.57	300.00	283.33	300.00
Total Expense	16,115.00	4,806.89	12,251.00	10,067.13	15,278.00
Net Ordinary Income	0.00	20,272.37	0.00	-1,864.43	0.00

The 2019 federal tax forms (990EZ etc.) and NY Charities Bureau re-registration (CHAR-500) were prepared and submitted before the 11/15/20 deadline. I will be sending in the forms for the Salamander parcel so that in the future it will be exempt from local taxation. Please note the "Proposed" budget column above, which will be voted upon at this (December) meeting.

Barn Dance Subcommittee - Emily Davis & Mike Warner:

Plans: Cancel for 2020

Problems: Covid

Progress: Plan for 2021

Membership Committee - Peter Youngbaer:

Progress:

Membership Renewals and New Members:

With no Old Timers' Reunion nor gathering of the Northeastern Regional Organization of the National Speleological Society, and no Barn Dance, in person opportunities for membership renewals continue to be absent. Our numbers are continuing to suffer from historic levels as a result. That said, we've held our own since September and have many renewals pending at this time. Hopefully, quite a few will show up at the NCC office soon. All renewal notices for memberships up through the end of December and early January have been sent. The database is current as of today, November 22.

Our current membership stands as follows, compared to the baseline of April 22, 2012, the first report I did after taking over as Membership Chair at the December 2011 Board meeting.

<u>November 22, 2020</u>	<u>September 11, 2020</u>	<u>April 22, 2012 (baseline)</u>
Life: 63	Life: 63	Life: 18
Family Life: 9	Family Life: 9	Family Life: 0
Benefactor: 9 (+3)	Benefactor: 6 (+2)	Benefactor: 10
Regular: 62	Regular: 62 (-14)	Regular: 88
Family: 14	Family: 14 (-5)	Family: 16
Institutional: 5 (-1)	Institutional: 6	Institutional: 3
Total: 162 (+2)	Total: 160 (-18)	Total: 135

Note: Total in September was 160; June was 178; February was 179; November 2019 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, Vermont Cavers Association, Met Grotto, New Jersey Initial Response Team, and Helderberg - Hudson Grotto. If your grotto or organization isn't listed here, please urge them to renew or join. Thank you.*

Problems:

Coronavirus has severely cut into in-person caving and caving events, thus hindering membership outreach activities. With the news of potential vaccines on the horizon, let's hope that Spring will bring renewed life and activity and more personal interactions. Our membership and our preserves need that level of human engagement to thrive.

Plans:

My Final Report: It has been my pleasure to serve as Membership Chair these past nine years. We have grown the organization in terms of membership, adding both the Life and Family Life member categories. We have also grown the number of cave preserves, thus fulfilling our core mission. We did a full membership survey and produced a new membership brochure. We celebrated our 40th Anniversary with a great dinner event, and have continued to grow since then. I am leaving the database in good shape, and membership solicitations current. While I am giving up this position, I will continue to update the database over the next few weeks to deal with the renewals that are pending, and I am happy to assist in orienting and training any successor.

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

Publications – Christa Hay:

No changes from last report.

Newsletter sent out in time for the 30 day notice time for a number of position openings.

Technology Committee Report – Mike Chu:

Status quo, no issues to report. Been updating the aliases and answering tech related emails as usual.

Volunteer Value Committee – Vince Kappler:

Vince Kappler
volunteervalue@necaveconservancy.org

Progress:

Year to date totals: 403.5 hours of volunteer work on NCC projects for a total value of \$14,847. Members also reported traveling a total of 3180 miles to work on projects.

Although VV totals were severally impacted by the coronavirus lock down, some members were still able to record time working for the NCC. The Treasurer and Office committees reported on their work from home or virtual meetings held to conduct NCC Business. John D., Jonah S., Erik N., and Devon H. reported maintenance and inspection time on preserves.

Plans:

I will send periodic VV reminders to the membership and monitor data collection.

Problems:

None at this time

**Attachment D
Secretary's Report**

EC Meeting Minutes
November 1, 2020, 10:00am
Online via Videoconference

Called to order 10:12am

Present: R. Simmons, B. Folsom, T. Engel, M. Berger, J. Morris-Siegel, D. Hedges

1) Bentleys Preserve incident update

Simmons sent out to the Board a draft of the letter he'd like to send to the involved group, and will take comments and then circulate another draft.

[REDACTED]

Engel asked whether Preserve Managers need to seek Board permission before contacting the authorities about trespassers on the preserves they manage,

Berger states that he believes it is within the purview of the property managers to involve the authorities if they wish, without consulting with the Board.

[REDACTED]

2) LTA grants

Simmons received e-mail from his contacts at the LTA a couple weeks ago.

[REDACTED] It's still up in the air whether there's going to be a round of funding for the NYCSP grants this fall because of COVID-19. It could happen, but usually an announcement about the program is already out by this point. The typical assumption is that if the program is funded and they decide to run it, usually the first week of December is when application materials are due; it's unknown whether they'd extend that this year. Engel thinks that the Environmental Protection Fund has a dedicated funding source that ensures that the money is already there regardless of year-to-year budgeting decisions.

3) Progress on recruiting to fill vacant positions (Sellecks Manager, Membership Chair, Fundraising Chair, Vermont representative, Investment Management Committee Chair) and advertisement

Simmons reports that a friend of J. O'Reilly may be interested in taking on Sellecks. He's received no bites yet for the other positions. He has also sent out a draft announcement for the NCC News, which needs to be published by the 5th of this month to provide enough notice to allow the Board to fill positions with suitable candidates at the December meeting (he's talked with D. Brass about the timeline). Berger noted that at the last meeting, he and Hedges expressed tentative interest in Membership Chair, Nieman expressed willingness to care for Sellecks, and Hatfield expressed interest in Fundraising, pending some discussion about requirements and qualifications. While enthusiasm is often the main factor in filling a position as we always want to bring more people into the fold and engage with those who wish to volunteer, Folsom and others expressed some concern about the risks involved with filling the Chair of the Investment Management Committee position with someone based primarily on enthusiasm, especially as the Acts the Board has adopted empower the person in that position to have some direct access to certain accounts. Berger states that he doesn't think we're obligated to appoint someone if the Board doesn't feel that they're the right fit for a given position, even if they're the only one to express interest - we need to advertise vacancies and solicit interest in positions, and then the Board needs to make decisions in the best interests of the organization.

4) Dome 12 culvert question

Berger received a question from Armen about whether installing a culvert to shore up the approved Dome 12 dig project would negatively impact us from the perspective of risk exposure. The primary reason for the question is that it's a manmade improvement. We discussed the topic at length, and noted that in many ways, it is consistent with our existing practices at certain preserves, and with published information on how we manage our caves. As examples, we have large ladders and a culvert permanently installed as entrance features at multiple of our caves, have allowed bolts to be placed in several of them, have allowed traverse safety lines to be installed in certain places, etc. We're not unique, even in our region, in this respect - multiple of the local NSS-managed caves also have either permanent ladder or bolt installations. It was also noted that sinkholes are often manmade, and Engel points out that trails, steps, bridges, etc. are also manmade and make visitation easier and safer. Further, a culvert is likely necessary to prevent erosion or collapse, to control water flow, and might be part of a gating system. Put another way, it facilitates proper management of the resources we're responsible for stewarding. Berger also notes that all (or nearly all) of our published management plans detail what must be done when someone proposes a dig project for approval, and those requirements include describing shoring plans to stabilize

the dig site. The conclusion is that we appreciate the thoughtful question being asked, but don't believe that installation of the culvert under discussion is inconsistent with our existing policies or practices, and thus shouldn't alter our risk profile significantly.

5) Traino Preserve farming incursion

The farmer adjacent to (and encroaching upon) our land at the Traino Preserve happens to be the same farmer who had been farming some of our land at Onesquethaw. There's currently corn being farmed at the Traino preserve between the road and our property line. Maybe we should think about work days at the preserve over the winter to get the property lines marked and expand the parking area, and then get gravel down in the spring before the muddy season starts. Engel's read is that the farmer may be intentionally avoiding making an effort to find where the property lines are, in order to avoid knowingly farming across neighboring land. Morris-Siegel suggests going to Home Depot and picking up 2"x2"x8' pressure-treated posts to put our boundary marker signs on. [REDACTED] bought the Palange lot and the house. We haven't yet established definitely whether they're on our land; marking the boundary may be difficult for lack of pins having been placed when the subdivision survey was done. As of last weekend, Hedges reports that the corn is still there and hadn't yet been harvested when he looked at the Traino ash scattering event. Though a survey of the property was done by and for the Palange family in order to be able to transfer land to us, the NCC has no relationship with the surveyor. Simmons took a to-do item to contact the surveyor, get a quote for him to mark the boundaries; we believe that a lot of corners haven't been marked. Morris-Siegel suggests that they may be able to recover some of the survey markers if they do it soon. Simmons says that the survey is a couple years old, so it's not too likely that recovering markers will work out. Our neighbor, [REDACTED], doesn't seem bothered at all by the visitors parking on the road and walking along the corn line. Engel shares that the surveyor was Charles Hite of Ravena, and that we also have an additional neighbor at the preserve. Hedges says that the corn is on an area where we'd like to put some of the parking, and where we'll probably want to put part of the trail. Berger asked if we thought there was any possibility of trading farming rights for use of the apartment, but Morris-Siegel explains that the farmable area on our land is only approximately 0.25 acres compared with the enormous field already being farmed, and farming rights just wouldn't be worth enough to broach the topic. On a related note, Simmons has e-mailed B. Nettleton of C. T. Male about obtaining a quote for monumenting the northern strip of land at the Knox Preserve out to Middle Road.

6) Issue with personal contact info inappropriately available on the website

This is a repeat of the issue from last year, where we had jumped on the issue to take things down. Simmons talked with Armen and Chu, who worked on it, and indicated that they believed it was gone and must be a cached copy. At this meeting, several of the participants believed that to be the case, and there was arguing about the topic until Berger shared his screen, clicked on the link provided by the upset party, and ultimately demonstrated also fetching the file without a web browser, and thus without any sort of cache. There was a bunch of exasperation over letting one of our members down with what really on the surface seemed like a straightforward request that was apparently not. Morris-Siegel was planning to see Armen shortly after the meeting, and indicated that he'd share the demonstration of how to fetch the file and prove that it was still available.

7) State Employees Federal Appeal (SEFA) program application

SEFA uses pool resources to allow state employees to designate deductions from their paychecks to go to charities registered with the New York Charities Bureau. We need to update our info with the New York State Charities Bureau (the annual CHAR500 filing we have to make to remain current). They're trying to push everyone to file their updates online this year, and Folsom explains that there's a bug with their site that is thwarting our attempts to file the necessary forms. Specifically, it incorrectly wants us to provide a copy of Schedule B from our IRS 990-EZ, even though we don't file Schedule B and aren't required to. Folsom is working through their tech support process. Berger inquires if this program is like the Combined Federal Campaign, and Engel responds that it is. Berger further asks if it shares the attribute that employees who don't designate a specific charity but want a charitable deduction taken from their paychecks have that money pooled together and then evenly distributed among all the eligible charities, and Engel says that in theory, that does happen with SEFA as well. From what Berger has learned by attending meetings of the National Speleological Foundation (NSF), which participates in the Combined Federal Campaign, the money received as a share of undesignated charitable deductions from federal employees can be very nontrivial.

8) [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

9) Map/book donation from Mark Cook's collection by his brother

Berger received an e-mail with an offer of some items that may be valuable, and Simmons responded to the e-mail, but hasn't heard back. Engel would be able to go retrieve the items.

10) Terrafirma Regional Representative election

As all organizations insured by Terrafirma are also members and owners of the organization, we have a say in electing its leadership. One of the two key committees that runs Terrafirma is its Members Committee, which functions as its Board, and includes a representative from each region of the country. We get to vote for our regional representative when their term ends, and their election is imminent. Last time this came up, it was shortly before a Board meeting, and we were able to discuss and choose a representative to vote for. Berger is under the impression that casting a ballot on behalf of the NCC requires a vote of the Board, and the timing doesn't really seem like it would work out to be able to have the necessary discussion and voting period to do this remotely in time to cast a ballot. He was asked whether we know any of the candidates up for election, and provided the names and a quick overview of the published bios and platforms - we do not have any experience with either of the two candidates. Engel asked whether such decisions should be delegated to the EC, and Simmons asked whether such decisions should be delegated to the appropriate Committee Chair. In any case, Berger was asked to take a look at the bios and platforms and see if he felt strongly enough that one candidate would be more aligned with our interests to attempt to get the Board to expeditiously conduct a remote vote.

11) Acquisitions

[REDACTED]

Salamander: The closing happened! We haven't heard back from our attorney that the final paperwork has been filed, although the deeds have been signed and filed for the little piece that was added back onto the Connors's residential piece. The survey map is also done and filed. There's some paperwork from the title company that the lawyers wanted to get in play, and then they were going to make the final filings either this week or next week. There are a few questions Berger needs answered in order to have our insurance carriers add the new Preserve to our coverage policies - where it has frontage, how many pieces it is, how many lots those pieces are made up of (these may affect the Terrafirma premium as there are interesting parcel counting rules if the land is not a single piece). Some of these questions were answered, and Simmons agreed to get the rest of the needed details to Berger.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

12) Conflict of Interest Disclosure Forms

Berger reminded us that collecting this annually from Board members is a requirement of the New York State Nonprofit Revitalization Act, and shared that we still have an incomplete set for this year despite several reminders of escalating urgency, and also that we're aware of a new conflict having arisen for someone which hasn't yet resulted in an update to the form. Simmons will send out a notice that we need to come into compliance with this requirement immediately.

13) NCC / Kingston Land Trust (KLT) Access to Property Agreement update

Simmons let his contact at KLT know that we were in fact closing on the property, and now needs to notify them that we're actually finally neighbors. He shared information on the general consensus from our Board that we need to have something more formal than an access agreement, which will trigger the \$5k donation we had agreed upon once the requirements are satisfied. And we may also want to have some work days, etc. Berger asked whether C. Gentry and E. Richards have been fully briefed on the prior discussions and goings-on on this topic.

14) NCC / Vermont Land Trust (VLT) Memorandum of Understanding update

The NCC's new Vermont representative, whoever that ends up being, should be heavily involved in this, so we're not doing anything else until one is designated. It was asked whether we'd considered and asked Porter or either of the Peases about interest in this position.

15) Knox bat encounter followup

Following the event described at the last Board meeting where one of the last parties to visit the cave before it closed for the season reported what seemed like atypical bat behavior (flying at the cavers, landing on one of their exposed legs, and scratching it, leading to the caver obtaining a prophylactic rabies shot despite not being able to identify a bite), Berger corresponded with C. Herzog of the NYS DEC Wildlife Diversity Unit. The response we received was read at the meeting. In short, Herzog shared with us that this is not unheard-of behavior, and that it would be more concerning if this had occurred above ground. He further shared that the NYS Department of Health defines an exposure as any skin-to-skin contact, and thus thinks that seeking rabies post-exposure treatment was the proper course of action, even without certainty that there was a bite. He also noted that based on the description of the event, the affected party was not properly clothed for a caving trip - on a properly-attired caver, the only exposed skin should have been the face.

16) Preserve Management Plan review frequency

Engel raised this topic with the note that we have now grown to 11 preserves, and our current rules require that Preserve Managers review their Management Plans and recommend changes for the Board to review every three years. Noting that we currently plan to review one plan at each of the quarterly Board meetings except the one where time is reserved for Officer Reviews, our recent acquisitions of the Traino Karst Preserve and the Salamander Cave Preserve have put us in a position where following that cadence will no longer meet the requirement, and it might be time to lower the frequency to once every four years. Berger suggests that instead of changing to another hard-coded number that we will hopefully outgrow soon, the policy should change to "one plan review per Board meeting" (modulo the one with time reserved for another purpose). There was general agreement that this seemed workable. As the frequency is codified in an Act of the Board, Berger will draft a motion to amend that act for the next meeting.

Engel asks if we need a Management Plan Committee to handle maintaining the management plans. Berger notes that Simmons was trying to essentially start a Preserve Manager Committee, although the initial meeting of that group fell through, and that we often use the Board as an incorrect but close-enough surrogate for it. Simmons asked if we should have a Management Plan Wrangler (which is a role V. Kappler previously informally held), and he also put forth the idea of a Stewardship Committee. Berger noted that that sounds like a middleground between our current model where each preserve runs autonomously with its own manager(s), and the model used by the Mohawk-Hudson Land Conservancy where there's a single person in charge of their conservation efforts. Simmons thinks that as we grow, we may need to head towards the direction of having some professional staff - in that model, an Executive Director does much of what our President does today, there are people in charge of specific functions of the conservancy, and the Board does more of what a corporate Board does - i.e. it gives direction, and doesn't do so much of the day-to-day

management. Making the jump from a small group to a big group involves a whole slew of considerations, including the size of the membership, ability to obtain grants to fund employees, a physical headquarters, some pretty scary investments that would involve loans, etc. The broad question is: when is the right time to do that? Simmons notes that there is an LTA/NYSCPP grant program to help with transitioning from an all-volunteer organization to one that looks more like the type outlined above, but it requires that you have a strategic plan that shows how your organization will reach a point where it doesn't require the grant money - in other words, it's bridge funding to get you from here to there, not an ongoing source of income. Staff development and capacity development are two of the types of grants they offer. Berger reminds us that producing that sort of vision statement and strategic plan can be one of the major focuses of a Board retreat with an experienced facilitator, and that we'd had an offer informally extended to us by SCCI's Executive Director to do that for us. Years ago, Simmons had been working on arrangements for such a retreat, until he was told to discontinue that effort. It was also mentioned that we keep buying on deficit and going back to the same well asking for contributions, which we can only do so much - we still haven't quite met either the Clarksville or the Traino fundraising goals. There's also Open Space Institute (OSI) funding available for acquisitions, but only in the Hudson Valley.

17) NCRC Level 1 Modular recap

Berger provided a recap of the Modular Level 1 course offered in a new format due to the pandemic over two evenings spent on Zoom and three weekends where the class met in-person in the field (separated from each other by two weeks to give time to identify any transmission). The class was split into two teams that tried to stay separated from each other, with instructors usually tied to one specific team, everyone was required to wear masks except while eating, screening interviews were conducted for each person as they arrived each weekend, sanitizer was provided in many locations, sleeping on-site was permitted but discouraged (many students lived within a half hour of the camp) and in most cases those staying on-site were able to make use of individual bunkrooms. Overall, Berger was impressed with how much the group was able to mitigate risk - in addition to all of the above, some exercises that would have ordinarily occurred in-cave were carried out above ground either at the camp or at a cliff site. Only one cave - Clarksville - was used, and it was only visited twice - once on each of two weekends. Different sections of the cave were used for the training experiences each team had on the second weekend of the course, and also for the mock rescue on the third weekend. All of this said, people cannot eat with masks on, so meals at the cafeteria were somewhat risky (especially when there was another group at the camp not nearly so careful about exposure as we attempted to be - the vast majority of the enrollees in the NCRC course were students from Albany Medical School), and many things done in cave rescue necessarily bring people closer together than 6 feet. We are not aware, however, of anyone associated with the course contracting COVID-19 during or within the weeks following the course, and were able to carry out a fairly substantial mock rescue despite the small size of the class, with all students who made it to the final week of the course successfully earning certification on the final day we were together. Berger and Hedges were among the volunteer instructing staff.

18) Knox research request from BCI / NYS DEC

Nothing further has happened so far as Simmons is aware since we last discussed this topic at the previous EC meeting. He reached out, but never heard back. Engel suggests that the main conclusion from this episode is that we need to fix our communication channels and stop having too many people trying to make decisions.

19) Letter to the membership

Simmons is writing it and getting it put into the newsletter this week. Berger asked about whether it would be better as a physical mailing, as it's getting close to time for an end-of-year appeal. Simmons says that he'd like to try both approaches.

20) [REDACTED]

21) Virtual events (Members' Day, NRO, Barn Dance) - are people still burned out?

We're still burned out. There was a thought that perhaps we should participate a bit more in some of the regional grotto meetings to let them know that the NCC is still alive and kicking. Folsom tossed around the idea of a webinar for the Board meeting; Berger wondered if inviting people to sit through one of those was a good way to drive people away, and thinks something more like a social event would probably be better. Folsom and Simmons suggested that perhaps a "Talk to Your Directors Q&A" type event might work, and asked when that sort of event could happen. Folsom suggests between Thanksgiving and Christmas, during the typical end-of-year appeal season. Alternatively, we could hold it in the new year - Engel suggests around February and Presidents' Day. Simmons asks if it should be a weeknight thing, or held on a Sunday afternoon to avoid interfering with other plans. It could be something like an NCC Virtual Bonfire. We'll think about a time for it and discuss during Committee of the Whole, and possibly flesh out some details before the Board Meeting.

22) Winter Board meeting - are we actually looking for a socially-distanced place?

We had mentioned at the previous Board meeting the possibility of finding a place where, unlike Speleobooks, we might be able to socially distance and hold the meeting in person. Though things haven't improved, it seemed appropriate to raise the question of whether we were still interested in doing this. The answer was a simple "no."

23) Report scheduling

The meeting is Sunday, December 6, and Berger would like the officers' attachment sections somewhere between November 28 and 30. So, officers will need committee reports by November 21.

End: 4:01pm