

## Minutes

December 5, 2021 9:00 AM

Online via Videoconference

Meeting called to order at 9:07am

1. Introduction and greetings – Robert Simmons
2. Attendance  
Officers: R. Simmons, T. Engel, M. Berger, B. Folsom  
Trustees: R. Armen, M. Ingalls, K. Dumont, E. Nieman, J. Morris-Siegel,  
R. Drake, P. Rubin, L. Hatfield
3. Absent with proxy: D. Hedges - C. Cantello has been appointed as proxy
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 (President and Secretary). Ingalls 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 Hatfield  
For: Rest  
Abstain: Berger  
[Motion passes - Trustees go into special session at 9:11am and exit special session at 9:15am.]  
Ingalls reports:  
Trustees’ Report: President: B. Simmons (2 year term)  
Secretary: M. Berger (2 year term)

Officers are seated and the meeting resumes at 9:20am.

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  
Against: Engel  
[The Committee of the Whole is opened]

### Topics:

#### 8.1 Science Committee submission and consideration process redux (R. L. Davis)

*[The Science Coordinator plans to attend the meeting and would like to discuss various aspects of and concerns that have been raised about the process by which proposals are submitted, considered, and approved during the course of recent research requests. This may overlap heavily with the discussion during Committee of the Whole Item 7.16 at the September 2021 Board meeting and Topics 15 and 17 at the August 2021 Executive Committee meeting.]*

Davis gave a detailed description of the challenge he sees in following our current research proposal approval process, both because of the documentation that can be found on the web referencing our prior process, and because of how onerous he feels it would be for a project encompassing several preserves to have to make separate proposals to ad-hoc committees for each of the preserves. Drake mentioned that the NSS utilizes a Google Form early on in their process to somewhat informally get the ball rolling (a “propose to propose,” essentially). Ultimately, Berger pointed out that we can essentially entirely shield the researchers from the difference between the old approval process and the current one - there’s no reason that the researchers can’t put together one comprehensive unified research project proposal, containing detail about each of the caves they propose to conduct

work in. We can then internally take that unified proposal, and distribute it to each of the appropriate preserves' ad-hoc committees to review the generic parts of the proposal and the specifics for the cave in their purview. Once all such ad-hoc committees have approved, the researchers can be informed that their project has been approved; it need not be visible to them that the entities internal to the NCC which made the decisions were not the Board. This means that the researchers get to do exactly what they would have under the old process, as if they were preparing a proposal that would undergo only Board review, and yet we can follow our actual current proposal vetting process. This seemed agreeable to both Davis and the Board.

#### 8.2. New York State Conservation Partnership Program (NYSCPP) scientific research project and other grant updates (Simmons)

*[This is the usual followup topic on progress with the grant project and equipment loans/rentals.]*

Simmons says that we'll be applying for a Transaction Grant for the Salamander Cave Preserve acquisition (we hadn't closed on the property the last time we applied for it, and so weren't awarded the grant), and one for the survey and legal costs for the recent Clarksville addition. He also tells us that the Human Influences on Caves scientific research grant project is on hold after he and Ingalls discussed it and concluded that we don't have the time and personnel resources to continue it this year, and that to pursue it further, we'd likely benefit from having the help of a dedicated grad student. Berger notes that he's worried about what happens if we don't pick up and complete the second year of this project, as nearly all of the first year was data collection, and the publishable results would've mostly come out of year two; he worries that it might give the appearance that we didn't follow through on the work we'd proposed, and may harm our chances of success with future grant applications. Simmons agrees that it's important to get something we can show the world out of this if possible. Berger also notes that while finding a grad student to take on this work may be difficult, funding them should not be, as the NYSCPP grants are only one of the possible available funding sources. As an example, he notes that the Cave Conservancy Foundation (CCF) offers substantial graduate student grants for this sort of work. Hatfield inquires what the typical process is for finding a grad student, and Ingalls indicates that she's not sure, but imagines that you begin by looking for a Principal Investigator at a university whose work is close to our field of interest. Cantello suspects that it all comes down to money. Hatfield suggested a contact that she has at Union College, and Engel points out that Davis and Warner have a reasonable handle on recruiting graduate students for speleological research projects. Ingalls notes that she's not entirely sure if the sort of analysis that will come out of this project is easily publishable, because she's not sure what journals might accept it, but that she's looking into it, and will talk with others at NEBWG about the issue. Simmons points out that while it would be great to get into a reputable journal, it would also suffice to self-publish a paper on our website to be able to show our work to the world.

#### 8.3. Sellecks Karst Preserve Management Plan review (Nieman)

*[This is the periodic review of this preserve's management plan. A draft of the Management Plan with the proposed revisions was circulated by the Preserve Managers and is also included in the meeting materials. Approval will be voted on in Item 11.]*

Nieman specifically requested comments on the new proposal to codify a requirement to obtain a permit in order to dive in Sellecks, with appropriate cave diving certification as a prerequisite. Berger, who had served as a sherpa on a number of T. Garlock's dives in Sellecks when A. Traino was the Preserve Manager, notes that the current proposal essentially puts into writing what was the unwritten practice previously - even though Sellecks was not a permit cave, they were required to obtain specific permission from Traino prior to any of the dive trips. Hatfield asks whether there are liability concerns associated with this. Berger responds that there would be if we were presuming to make determinations about who is qualified to dive in the cave. However, since the proposal is simply to require evidence of one of the standard cave diving certifications issued by universally recognized certification authorities, the decisions about qualifications to dive have been placed in the proper hands rather than our own. Engel notes that the Clarksville Managers require the same thing as Nieman and Vasile have proposed here for Sellecks if someone wishes to dive the sump from the Lake Room. Dumont wonders whether we should have a more generic diving policy applicable across all the preserves. Berger asks Nieman about the broken kiosk and the stated plans to replace it, and the requirement in the Management Plan that everyone sign in at the kiosk, as he worries that it may confuse visitors once we launch Project Guestbook about whether they should sign the physical register log or the electronic guestbook or both. Nieman suggests that we see how both the kiosk replacement and the Project Guestbook launch progress go, and revisit this question when the time comes. Berger agrees that this sounds fine. Morris-Siegel and Dumont offered some typographical corrections for the plan.

#### 8.4. "NCC Fund Agreement" contract with the National Speleological Foundation (Simmons, Berger)

*[The proposed contract was circulated with the meeting materials and will be voted upon in Item 12.]*

Simmons explained that this contract has been in draft form for a number of years, and the issue was recently picked up again. Berger offered Simmons a number of suggestions on what we might ask the NSF to agree to alter in the contract, as a markup of Simmons's original markup from years ago. Simmons incorporated the suggested requests into what he sent to B. Ashbrook (NSF Treasurer at the time), who essentially agreed to all of the

requested alterations. The NSF Board subsequently voted to approve the contract that will come before us during New Business today. Nobody raised any questions.

8.5. “Declaration of Mutual Access Easement” contract with the Kingston Land Trust (Simmons)

*[The proposed contract was circulated with the meeting materials and will be voted upon in Item 13.]*

Simmons believes this document is ready for signing. Nobody raised further questions about it, after the numerous previous substantive discussions the Board has had both at meetings and in e-mail threads.

8.6. “Cave Preserve Lease Agreement” contract with Gabriel Krystal for the Jack Packers Cave Preserve (Simmons)

*[The proposed contract was circulated with the meeting materials and will be voted upon in Item 14.]*

Simmons indicates that the Jack Packers owners have agreed that this lease looks acceptable and ready for signing. Again, due to several previous substantial discussions, no major questions were raised on this topic.

8.7. National Cave and Karst Management Symposium (NCKMS) wrap-up (Berger, Drake, Rubin)

*[We’ll hear updates from our delegation to the conference.]*

Berger reported that the conference lost its venue on the Friday leading up to it due to a major building flood, resulting in the entire attendee list receiving an e-mail that day asking “does anyone know somewhere else local we could have the conference?” It relocated to a Holiday Inn, which we were sharing as a venue with other events during the week. As a result, the sponsor booths were along the wall in the hallway and unstaffable, rather than in the presentation room, which cut down on our opportunities for people to directly see us as the NCC folks, and to push the Give and Gear Up Raffle, though we did put up the poster and try to hype it when we could. Additionally, because of the limited space, the posters weren’t on display all week - they were mostly visible on one designated afternoon. Rubin did, however, manage to present two posters - both the one he worked on with Nieman for this conference, and a reprisal of his WNS poster that J. Kennedy had asked him to bring. Drake gave a well-received talk on Tuesday afternoon, leading to several offers of other venues around the country where she could conduct research. Berger somehow got the very last speaking slot on Friday before the conference adjourned, and told the story of how the Clarksville Preserve has been assembled over the past twenty years. Drake was excited to find lots of people and projects working on groundwater sampling, and that lots of people both young and old were involved in the conference. Rubin thought that it was a good conference, with constant talks and trips, and he enjoyed a conversation he got to have over lunch with G. Schindel, as well as seeing so many younger folks getting involved. Berger was excited to hear Drake say that she plans to attend again in the future, and notes that we’ve now twice in a row sent a sizable delegation when the conference wasn’t in our region, and have made a name for the NCC as a very active participant, and he’s very excited to see us continue to do so. Though we knew that Warner was working on a proposal to have NCKMS come to our area with the NCC as the major host two years from now, it appears most likely that the next conference will be in TAG; we’re not sure what happened to our hosting proposal. Berger also mentions that while there was no remote attendance option, they did videotape all of the speakers, and we’ve been led to understand that the recordings will be posted in some number of weeks. So, those of you who weren’t at the conference may yet be able to hear his and Drake’s talks.

8.8. NRO hosting in the Spring (Folsom)

*[At the last meeting, we decided to bring this topic back for discussion at this meeting for further discussion and perhaps a more firm commitment to host.]*

Folsom notes that he placed this topic on the agenda before the Omicron variant of COVID-19 became a major concern. Simmons asks if we still have a deposit on file with the Harley Rendezvous site. Folsom confirms that we do, and that the traditional weekend (the third full weekend in May) is available. Berger notes that he recalls hearing that approximately 50 attendees went to the “NRO2.0” event that was informally coordinated by people who wanted to get together despite the formal Fall 2021 NRO being cancelled. With numbers like that, he worries about whether we’d lose money by trying to hold it at the Harley Rendezvous site because of the fixed cost of booking that venue, as opposed to a site where the camping costs are per-person and collected by the site. However, he also points out that boosters are now widely available, and that this event is nearly a half year from now. He also notes that at their recent meeting, the Boston Grotto voted to host the following one (Fall 2022) to celebrate an anniversary. Morris-Siegel is convinced that despite the fixed venue cost, the event would end up making money through the raffles, etc. Rubin voices health concerns about anti-vaccination people and others who will attend the event acting irresponsibly. Drake points out that we don’t yet know how bad the Omicron variant is, but also that people who want to be boosted will be boosted by May, and that it’s easier to hold the event almost entirely outside in the Spring. Nieman shares in Berger’s concern about attendance numbers, but for a different reason - he states that visitation is notably down at Clarksville based on the number of vehicles he sees there when passing by regularly. Berger is surprised to hear this, because the number of Knox permits issued this past season might have broken a record. Morris-Siegel confirms that visitation at Merlins this past season was also noticeably up. Berger points out that in order to be able to potentially hold the event in May, we’d need to decide to do it now, as we wouldn’t be able to start working on it if we pushed the decision back to our next quarterly meeting - there wouldn’t

be enough lead time. Hatfield suggests that we proceed, but make it easy to cancel so that we don't have to go through the painful and rushed ordeal that was conducting an electronic vote this time around. Cantello suggests that perhaps we should hold a scaled down NRO "Engel-style" (by which he is referring to the sorts of NROs that Engel had occasionally organized in the past in very non-traditional locations, such as counties that covers seldom visit and that don't have our usual large caves). Hatfield suggests that we have a motion in new business come out of this. Berger indicates that that would be fine, but that in order to word it, he needs to understand how we propose that a decision on whether to cancel the event gets made without the Board having to conduct a vote. Hatfield asks if we can delegate that decision to a committee, and Berger agrees that this is a viable way to define it in the motion. Engel suggests that the committee use testing positivity rates as a guide, and he also asks whether we can tell unvaccinated people not to come. Berger responds: "you can tell them whatever you want," implying that it's not as if we're going to be able to control compliance. Drake notes that she's seen more and more events (conferences, etc.) requiring that attendees upload proof of vaccination, and feels that such requests are becoming less politicized and more mainstream. N. Berg suggests that our committee largely follow what New York is putting out as guidance as the time draws closer.

#### 8.9. Fundraising efforts (Hatfield, Drake, Berger)

*[There are multiple fundraising initiatives, some recently completed and some underway. We can discuss and update on these here.]*

Hatfield excitedly reports that the Give and Gear Up Raffle was a success and thanks Drake and the several others who helped to work on it. Berger notes that when Drake was adjusting the goal, she'd asked if the number she picked was too ambitious, and Berger told her the open secret that when it looks like we might miss one of these goals, Engel often steps in to ensure that we make the goal at the end. He is particularly proud to note that this time, we pulled it off without Engel having to do that. Berger also points out, though, that there was a very clear pattern that each time we reached out to a group of people to "shake the tree," instead of it resulting in a handful of donations from the various people who indicated that they'd be contributing, it seemed to result in exactly one more donation, and we could clearly tie many of the donations to a specific reminder or advertisement to a specific grotto. He notes that Folsom mentioned at the EC meeting that there's a rule of thumb that if you want people to do a thing that they've expressed interest in, you need to get the message in front of them six different times. So, the conclusion is that we need to hone our campaign skills for next time. Morris-Siegel says that on multiple occasions, he and others tried to post about the raffle on the NSS Facebook page, and it was taken down as spam; Simmons was irked at the same thing. Drake mentioned that she discovered there were a surprisingly large number of moderators of the NSS's FB page, with no clear coordination or guidelines on how they were making decisions like that. She also suggests that we might pay Facebook to promote the raffle next time. Hatfield asked when we should hold Give and Gear Up regularly if we're going to repeat it. Berger suggests that scheduling it so that it regularly overlaps with both Fall NRO and the Barn Dance seems to make sense, so that it's available at multiple events.

Berger also brings up the timing of the end-of-year appeal, which really needs to be in people's hands in the next week or so in order for them to be able to decide to make tax deductible contributions to the NCC for 2021. He notes that he received the WVCC's appeal a week or two ago and was reminded that we keep missing our opportunity here, and identified last year that we couldn't do that again. Hatfield asks how it interacts with the Giving Tuesday timing, as we've just made an ask of the membership. There's a good deal of agreement that we can't ask the same people too many times in rapid succession to open their wallets. Berger suggests that perhaps given that we just put out a request for Giving Tuesday, we simply avoid making an explicit ask in the annual letter, but still get it in front of people as a recap of accomplishments and ongoing work, and leave it to those who interpret it as an excuse to donate to do so if they wish, and let it simply be good communication and contact for everyone else.

Berger reported that the electronic guestbook kiosk add-on passive fundraising project has been named "Project Guestbook" for simplicity, and that he, Hatfield, Drake, and Armen met the week after the last Board meeting as planned, hashed out what the different deliverable components of the project are, and parceled out tasks. Hatfield has produced a mockup of what a guestbook webpage might look like; Armen will be transforming the mockup into an actual webpage. Hatfield has also come up with two possible designs for kiosk add-ons to display the QR codes, and we're looking at making up a sample. Berger is working on putting together the followup e-mail that will be sent out a few days following a visitor's guestbook submission to thank them for their visit, tell them a bit more about who we are and what we do, and offer an opportunity to join or donate. Drake will be helping us to proof publicity materials much as we did for her Give and Gear Up project. We'd agreed to meet again to check in on progress a month later. Though Berger did poll for availability, that was the week before NCKMS, and only Hatfield responded to the poll. Since Berger wasn't done preparing for NCKMS and suspected the same was true for Drake, he decided to let it slip; we'll have to pick it up again.

There was also brief discussion of the Mtn Dew \$5k grant that Hatfield put together an application for. Berger helped provide background about the Knox sinkhole trail restoration project for that application, and the EC offered some editing suggestions; it was submitted shortly after the last EC meeting. We'll likely know the results in the next couple of weeks.

Simmons tells us of the Kingston Land Trust's recent fundraiser that he attended. There was a nature walk followed by a soiree, and he did notice that they had a QR code displayed for donations. Hatfield describes to us the "Dip Jar" she saw at another organization's event - it's a card reader that automatically charges a \$5 donation, and it seems that simply by having this present at an event, it tends to cause people to use it... sometimes multiple times. There's a fee for the machine and the service, of course. Lastly, Simmons notes that as it looks like Hatfield will in fact agree to take on the Fundraising Chair role, we'll have to get her added to the distribution list for the periodic Office Reports so that she can be notified when donations come in.

#### 8.10. 2022 Budget discussion (Folsom)

*[Our 2022 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 Item 21.]*

We discussed what certain budget line items entail, such as the Preserves Administration item including funding the the Landscape Conservation software and trail and boundary markers, Bentleys including money for stone for the driveway, Clarksville having a substantial amount of money to reconstruct the changing area, Knox having a large amount of money for the sinkhole trail restoration project (though we hope to receive a grant to cover most of it), Merlins having money to replace the Dome 12 culvert, Salamander including funds for the kiosk, Traino having money for the kiosk and the driveway, and the Website line item increasing due to increases in the hosting costs (which are regularly donated by Chu). The only change that was made to the proposal during this discussion was that in light of our plans to sponsor NEBWG, the Sponsorships line item was increased by \$300, and correspondingly, our Donation income target was increased by \$300.

#### 8.11. Native American acknowledgment (Dumont)

*[There is a growing sense among many conservation organizations (and others) that appropriate stewardship of land includes acknowledgment of the Native Americans who once used or inhabited it. We may want to follow this trend. See discussion in Topic 1 in the EC Minutes included as Attachment D.]*

Dumont notes that some of the others in attendance may be more familiar with this issue than he is, but he became particularly aware of this issue when an episode of the PBS "Eons" program that he was watching made note that several fossils had been discovered from various different places, and at the end of the video, they acknowledged the tribes who used to live there. He shared with us some ideas for how we might do similarly, and as an example, showed us a sample of the blurb that "Eons" presented at the end of their show. We might put something like this on our kiosks, website, management plans, etc. Engel indicates that he's opposed to taking action on this issue, after having discussed it with a former colleague who worked with some of the tribes that had been in New York. That colleague suggested that typically, acknowledgment of tribes formerly inhabiting an area in the context of fossil discoveries is made when fossils or other relics have been removed from an area, and that since we've done no such thing and are simply stewarding the land, we're not subject to the same onus to acknowledge, and it's not worth the work involved. Morris-Siegel offers a suggestion that we look at the <http://nativegov.org/> website, and notes that a number of land trusts have gotten behind an effort to add Native American acknowledgment where it's previously been missing. Simmons shares that the Kingston Land Trust has a person designated to handle this, and that such an acknowledgment was made during the introduction to the nature walk he recently went on with them. Dumont feels that this is the right thing to do, and that it doesn't matter whether the Native Americans knew of the caves. He further doesn't feel that much work would be involved. Hatfield and Rubin agree, and Ingalls feels that it's worth looking into, and is the right thing to do. We should talk to the tribes from our area. Hatfield offered a contact who may be able to help with some info.

#### 8.12. Officer continuity planning (Simmons, Engel, Folsom, Berger)

*[At this point in the meeting, your President and Secretary will have each either just been elected to their final consecutive term in office, or perhaps will currently be serving at their final meeting in their roles. We have known this difficult topic was coming for some years, and it is time to begin seriously working on it. Please see the somewhat extensive discussion the EC started on the issue in Topic 18 in the EC Meeting Minutes in Attachment D. The officers have a number of thoughts for you, and know that there's a great deal of work for us to do, but we also feel that the Trustees need to be involved in driving this process. Hopefully we will start planning for the NCC's ongoing success at this meeting.]*

Simmons and Berger had each said a bit on this topic just after they were elected to their final consecutive terms as President and Secretary, respectively, earlier in this meeting. Moving into the formal discussion of this topic, Simmons notes that when he first came into his current position, it seemed to be a nearly insurmountable task to come up to speed on everything he needed to know, and in seeing some of the things that Berger and Folsom have worked on in their roles during this time, he's sure that this is not an issue unique to the position of President, and yet we now need to figure out how to replace ourselves. Over the past couple of years, he's tried to make a start at simplifying both the process of replacement and the President's job description by creating a Stewardship position (which Morris-Siegel now holds) and trying to become more of a manager than a "doer." He believes he'd have an incredibly hard time selling his volunteer job to anyone. While he continues to be disappointed at not having gotten

any officer reviews, it's time to shift to solving this problem. Similarly, Berger has tried to help ease the process for the next group of officers by explaining to the Board some time back the more-complicated-than-you'd-think process by which meeting agendas get put together to ensure that the NCC doesn't drop tasks on the floor, and by changing EC meeting minutes from a series of mostly one-liners about each of a few topics to a recap of the thoughtful discussion that takes place on dozens of topics at each of these meetings so that the Board can actually have a solid understanding of what it is that the EC spends its time on in between Board meetings. He also noted that he's not really sure what the "next thing" he can do for the NCC is once he completes his term as Secretary, and is interested in suggestions. Simmons, for his part, is looking to get more involved with the governance aspects of the NCC as he moves on from his time as President. Berger is worried about continuity because, while we do have two years until new officers need to be seated, we have far less time than that if we don't want to experience an emergency at the last minute - we'd have to be working with and training successors long before our terms are over in order for them to be able to take over and succeed without major pain. Dumont suggests that we should interpret the lack of officer review feedback as a form of feedback in itself - a compliment indicating that the Trustees are, by and large, happy with the work the officers have been doing, and he assures us that if there were serious dissatisfaction or issues that the Trustees weren't convinced that the officers are already aware of and working towards solving, the Trustees almost certainly would've managed to produce such comments in a review despite the lack of time everyone has.

Dumont also agrees that we need to start working now towards succession plans, and that to be successful, officer shadowing really needs to start before the new officer terms. Folsom is worried about finding the next Treasurer, and is concerned that we've boxed ourselves in by passing a Bylaw change to implement term limits as a solution to a problem that we're not still facing at this time; he suggests that we could perhaps undo that Bylaw change. Hatfield inquires how Bylaw changes work, and Berger answers the question, though he doesn't support reversing the change - changes need to be proposed by a Board member, and the membership has to be given 21 days notice of a proposed change to be taken up at a meeting, and all members (not just the Board) who attend the meeting where the proposal is taken up are allowed a vote, which must pass by a two-thirds majority. Engel points out that if we were to undo the term limits, it would remove the bureaucratic impetus. Berger agrees and clarifies that there'd be no more motivation for us to solve the continuity and transition challenge, which would still exist, but would hit us at an unexpected moment when we'd become overly comfortable, rather than on a long-planned schedule like it is now. Morris-Siegel concurs that undoing the Bylaw change wouldn't solve the problem.

As the discussion appeared to be tapering off, Berger indicated that he'd like to insist that we not move onto the next topic until we have at least a concrete next step coming out of this discussion, for fear that we'd just keep kicking the can down the road until we had an emergency. There was general agreement on this. Morris-Siegel thinks that our goal should be to know who the likely next President and Secretary will be within about a year. Berger says that he agrees that we have about a year to figure out who the next officers may be, but that well before then, what we really need to do is to design what the transition process looks like, so that once we know who the likely successors are going to be, training can occur on a reasonable schedule. He also notes that though the current officers realize there's a lot of work for them to do to help prepare for and train their successors, and they're prepared to do that difficult work, the Trustees need to help design what the actual process of transitioning and ensuring continuity looks like. Dumont wonders whether we should adjust the Bylaws such that we vote for the next set of officers one year out from them taking office, though Engel says that he doesn't really see a one-year-out co-officer thing working. Armen points out that voting for the next officers a years out would solve the issue brought about by term limits, but not the issue of "redundancy" - that is, being prepared for continuity if an officer were to leave (whether by choice or by circumstances) unexpectedly at some point substantially before they'd reach their term limit. Simmons will establish and facilitate an ad-hoc committee to begin working through this process.

#### 8.13. International Year of Caves and Karst (Berger)

*[We'd originally agreed to register as participating in this 2021 event. When the pandemic foreclosed on any non-virtual events as likely possibilities for us to host, we decided not to pursue it. As our NCKMS delegation learned, the pandemic has caused the event to be formally extended throughout 2022 - see discussion in Topic 26 in the EC Meeting Minutes in Attachment D. This topic will allow us to decide whether we should agree formally to participate in 2022, and if so, what events we may hold.]*

The group in general felt that we should restate our intent to participate. Berger suggested that in order to feel confident that we will actually pull this off, before we add a motion to participate and have him register us as a participating organization, we should come out of this topic with at least one concrete idea about an event that we might run. Simmons noted that it seems like the sorts of events currently listed on their site are fairly large-scale productions, like Convention and the International Congress. Berger shared that the fairly clear message the NCKMS delegation got from George Veni's talk was that we should "make it our own," and that anything we'd do to bring the cave and karst conservation message to the public would be a great contribution. Engel suggested that we could host a community day at the Clarksville Preserve. Rubin likes the idea, and suggests that we could offer a guided tour of the Clarksville geological trail, which will hopefully be established next year, as part of the event. Hatfield wonders about presenting the geological trail as a video walk of the preserve, and Berger suggests that

perhaps we have this be a hybrid offering - we have an in-person guided walk on one or two days, and have a videographer capture it, and then on a later day, we can stream the video for folks not near Clarksville. Berger also asked about the “canned” presentations Engel has for things like Clarksville Day. Engel reports that he has two such canned presentations, and could offer them, perhaps in the parking lot or near the sinkhole as one of the offerings during our community day in concert with the guided geological trail walks. He also thinks we may be able to partner with Thacher Park to do something there. Having come out of the discussion with at least two concrete event ideas that seem easily within reach, Berger will add a motion in New Business to participate, and if approved, will register us on the IYCK website.

#### 8.14. Reworking our communication practices (Dumont)

*[The announcement about this meeting that went out with the quarterly newsletter misinformed the membership about the time and venue, and having to send out mass e-mails correcting such things can be embarrassing and is a reminder that we're perhaps not doing what we should to review communication before it goes out the door.]*

Dumont notes that he's not really sure this is an issue that we're going to manage to solve here. Simmons notes the survey that Dunham posted on our Facebook page about whether people read the NCC Newsletter, which got an overwhelming majority of replies indicating that people do read it every time it comes out, so evidently people are prepared to read whatever printed material we send. Berger thinks that historically, we've had a cultural “loosey-goosey”ness about proofreading materials before they go out, noting the multiple issues we encountered as a result of not being careful about redacting certain items in the minutes we publish on the web, and that at one point years ago, it was suggested to him that he send a set of highlights from the unapproved minutes of the prior meeting for the Newsletter Editor to publish prior to the process where the Board reviews, makes corrections, and approves them. As the organization has grown and matured, he thinks that being less formal and careful about everything we send out has become progressively less reasonable. Morris-Siegel asks whether others have credentials for Mailchimp for redundancy. Berger responds that he believed Simmons was given credentials a while back, but Simmons informs us that, in fact, it never happened. Dumont asks whether we have a designated “communications person,” and Simmons says that we really don't, since we have a Publications person, a Publicity person, and a Newsletter Editor, and they're not all the same person, so there isn't really a centralized or standardized process. Simmons also points out that in years past, it was typical for people in those positions to be otherwise involved at Board Meetings, which made it easier for them to directly know what information was accurate. Dumont thinks we should accomplish something on this issue, and Engel suggests that we mostly need to discuss the process with two people. The conclusion is that an ad-hoc committee will look into how to define an improved process.

#### 8.15. Northeast Bat Working Group (NEBWG) (Ingalls)

Ingalls points out that the conference is in January this coming year, and we've often sponsored it before. If we wish to do so this time around, we'd have to decide at this meeting. The sponsorship levels were looked into, and the conclusion was that we should sponsor at the Bronze (\$250) level, which comes with a complimentary registration. The draft 2022 budget was adjusted accordingly. Ingalls notes that it's likely that her employer will pay for her registration. Hatfield expresses interest in attending as well.

#### 8.16. Meeting monitor and time checks (Dumont)

Adding this topic as the Committee of the Whole was about to close, Dumont suggests that we may in the future wish to designate someone to specifically check that we're staying on track and progressing through the meeting, and to call out periodic time checks. Simmons indicates that he may follow the suggestion.

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

Second by Engel

For: All

[The Committee of the Whole is closed]

Old Business

[None]

New Business

### 10. Berger moves: The minutes of the September 26, 2021 Board Meeting are approved.

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

Second by Morris-Siegel

For: All

[The minutes of the September 26, 2021 Board Meeting are approved]

11. Nieman moves: The revisions to the Sellecks Karst Preserve Management Plan, as amended during Committee of the Whole, are approved.  
[*The proposed revisions will have been discussed in Item 8.3 during Committee of the Whole.*]  
Second by Berger  
For: All  
[The revisions to the Sellecks Karst Preserve Management Plan are approved]
12. Simmons moves: The President is hereby authorized to sign the “NCC Fund Agreement” with the National Speleological Foundation on behalf of the NCC.  
[*The proposed contract with the NSF was circulated with the meeting materials, and discussed in Item 8.4 during Committee of the Whole.*]  
Second by Berger  
For: Rest  
Abstain: Engel  
[The President is authorized to sign the contract with the NSF]
13. Simmons moves: The President is hereby authorized to sign the “Declaration of Mutual Access Easement” with the Kingston Land Trust on behalf of the NCC.  
[*The proposed easement contract was circulated with the meeting materials, and discussed in Item 8.5 during Committee of the Whole.*]  
Second by Cantello  
For: Rest  
Abstain: Engel  
[The President is authorized to sign the easement contract with KLT]
14. Simmons moves: The President is hereby authorized to sign the “Cave Preserve Lease Agreement” with Gabriel Krystal for the proposed Jack Packers Cave Preserve on behalf of the NCC.  
[*The proposed lease contract was circulated with the meeting materials, and discussed in Item 8.6 during Committee of the Whole.*]  
Second by Engel  
For: All  
[The President is authorized to sign the lease agreement for the Jack Packers Cave Preserve]
15. Simmons moves: Upon signature of the “Cave Preserve Lease Agreement” referenced in Item 14 by the President and by Gabriel Krystal, the Jack Packers Cave Preserve is created.  
[*This action formally creates the permanent committee that allows us to carry on all the necessary activities for stewardship of a new preserve, including advertising for and appointing preserve managers, allocating a budget line item, etc.*]  
Second by Engel  
For: All  
[The Jack Packers Cave Preserve will be created upon signature of the lease agreement]
16. Simmons moves: Upon creation of the Jack Packers Cave Preserve, Kevin Dumont is appointed as interim Preserve Manager.  
[*Creation of the preserve and associated permanent committee in Item 15 will result in a vacancy in the position of Chairperson of that committee (also referred to as Preserve Manager). All such vacancies need to be advertised to the membership so that anyone interested in taking on the position has an opportunity to offer their service before the Board makes a permanent appointment. During the search process, someone will need to serve in the role on an interim basis.*]  
Second by Engel  
For: Rest  
Abstain: Dumont  
[Kevin Dumont is appointed interim Preserve Manager for the Jack Packers Cave Preserve once it exists]
17. Simmons moves: Adriane Hectus is appointed as co-Manager of the Spider Cave Preserve.  
Second by Dumont  
For: All  
[Adriane Hectus is appointed co-Manager of the Spider Cave Preserve]
18. Simmons moves: Leslie Hatfield is appointed as Fundraising Chair.  
Second by Berger  
For: Rest  
Abstain: Hatfield



[Leslie Hatfield is appointed Fundraising Chair]

19. Simmons moves: The President is hereby authorized to apply for Transaction Grants from the New York State Conservation Partnership Program of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation's Environmental Protection Fund for the acquisition expenses related to the Salamander Cave Preserve and the Hatfield/Schwartz addition to the Clarksville Cave Preserve.

*[Prior motions to apply for NYSCPP grants have required roll call votes, and we may have to do the same for this one.]*

Second by Morris-Siegel

Berger: Yes	Simmons: Yes	Engel: Yes	Folsom: Yes
Morris-Siegel: Yes	Ingalls: Yes	Dumont: Yes	Nieman: Yes
Rubin: Yes	Armen: Yes	Drake: Yes	Cantello: Yes
Hatfield: Abstain			

[The President is authorized to apply for NYSCPP Transaction Grants for the Salamander and Clarksville preserves]

20. Simmons moves: The President is directed to include a line item for trail design costs in the budget for the Transaction Grant from the New York State Conservation Partnership Program for the acquisition expenses related to the Salamander Cave Preserve.

Second by Ingalls

For: All

[The NYSCPP Transaction Grant application for the Salamander Preserve will include a budget line item for trail design]

21. Folsom moves: The NCC budget for 2022, as presented in Attachment C and amended during Committee of the Whole, is approved.

*[The proposed budget will have been discussed in Item 8.10 during Committee of the Whole.]*

Second by Engel

For: Rest

Abstain: Folsom

[The 2022 budget is approved]

22. Engel moves: The NCC thanks Al DeMaria for his years of service as Chair of the Surprise Cave Committee.

Second by Armen

For: All

[Al DeMaria has the NCC's thanks for his years of service]

23. Hatfield moves: The NCC will host the Spring 2022 NRO. An ad-hoc committee will be appointed, and shall have authority to cancel the event, if conditions warrant, without further Board action.

Second by Morris-Siegel

For: Rest

Abstain: Rubin

[The NCC will host the Spring 2022 NRO, subject to cancellation by an ad-hoc committee]

24. Berger moves: The NCC will participate in the International Year of Caves and Karst.

Second by Simmons

For: Rest

Abstain: Cantello

[The NCC will participate in the International Year of Caves and Karst]

25. Ingalls moves: The NCC will sponsor the Northeast Bat Working Group (NEBWG) conference at the "Bronze" level for \$258.50.

Second by Hatfield

For: Rest

Abstain: Ingalls

[The NCC will sponsor the 2022 NEBWG conference at the Bronze level]

26. Simmons moves: Ramon Armen is appointed co-Manager of the Merlins Cave Preserve.

Second by Morris-Siegel

For: Rest

Abstain: Armen

[Ramon Armen is appointed co-Manager of the Merlins Cave Preserve]

Informational point: The Spring 2022 NRO ad-hoc Committee is established with L. Hatfield [Chair], E. Davis, and B. Folsom.

Informational point: The Native American Acknowledgment ad-hoc Committee is established with K. Dumont [Chair] and P. Rubin.

Informational point: The Executive Succession ad-hoc Committee is established, with the President to facilitate its progress.

Informational point: The Conservancy Communications ad-hoc Committee is established with K. Dumont [Chair] and B. Simmons.

Informational point: Next EC meeting will be Sunday, February 6, 2022 at 10AM at a location to-be-determined or 9AM if entirely via videoconference.

Informational point: the Spring Board meeting will be Sunday, March 6, 2022 at 10 AM at HRP Associates or 9AM if entirely via videoconference.

Informational point: the late Spring EC meeting will be Sunday May 1, 2022 at 10AM at a location to-be-determined or 9AM if entirely via videoconference.

27. Simmons moves: The NCC Summer meeting will be Sunday, June 5, 2022 at 10AM perhaps at the Chu residence or 9AM if entirely via videoconference.

Second by Folsom

For: All

[The NCC Summer meeting will be Sunday, June 5, 2022 at 10AM if in person or 9AM if entirely via videoconference]

28. Simmons moves: The NCC thanks Emily Davis and Mike Warner for their gracious offer to host this meeting at their home, and regrets that pandemic and travel concerns prevented the Board from taking them up on the offer.

Second by Ingalls

For: All

[Emily Davis and Mike Warner have the NCC's thanks for their offer to host this meeting]

29. Engel moves: The Board shall enter Executive Session to discuss a personnel matter.

Second by Hatfield

For: Rest

Abstain: Morris-Siegel

[Motion passes - the Board enters Executive Session at 2:17pm and exits Executive Session at 3:17pm]

30. Engel moves: Paul Rubin is appointed co-Chair of the Science Committee.

Second by Morris-Siegel

For: Rest

Abstain: Cantello, Rubin

Absent: Nieman

[Paul Rubin is appointed co-Chair of the Science Committee]

31. Engel moves to adjourn.

Second by Hatfield

For: Rest

Against: Morris-Siegel

Absent: Nieman

[The meeting is adjourned]

Meeting adjourned at 3:20pm

**Attachment A  
President's Report**

1. Huge thanks to everyone that worked the Give and Gear Up fundraiser. Not sure of the net proceeds yet, but looks to be around \$5,000. That goes a long way to keeping us solvent this year. There have also been several very generous donations of unrestricted and Clarksville-dedicated funds!
2. Many thanks to Mitch, Riley, and Paul for repping the NCC at the NCKMS in Texas this year.
3. Special thanks to Leslie and Ellen for the gift of the Thook entrance and surrounding land. This is an amazing, generous, and fantastic thing for the conservancy and for the cave's long-term protection.
4. I am submitting NYSCPP grants for the Salamander donation and the Thook donation costs. I had discussed a possible joint venture with KLT for the development of the Salamander Preserve/Quarry parcels, but they were going in for a Development Grant (to fund personnel). The Hibernation Committee discussed putting in for the next phase of the Human Influences on Caves Grant (Part II, data analysis), but given current personnel issues, opted not to put in for that this year.
5. Discussions with the Hibernation committee have settled on keeping a couple of the bat acoustic detectors for our future use and selling the rest. I have a contact that uses the same equipment and am following up on that lead. We will also put the word out of their availability at the upcoming NEBWG in January.
6. Jacob is off and running on the Stewardship Coordinator position and we are working on several ideas.
7. The owner of the property is on board with the lease and now we just need to schedule a signing to add the [REDACTED] Preserve to our growing inventory.
8. Acquisitions has been relatively quiet over the last two months since the September meeting.
9. The draft Access Easement for Salamander Cave is ready to be signed.
10. I still need to schedule a meeting with the Columbia Land Conservancy President concerning [REDACTED].
11. We did not do Officer's reviews again this year. As you all know, assuming we are reelected this year, Mitch and I will be in our last terms as Secretary and President. I would like the Governance Committee discussions to begin focusing on succession planning in a serious manner.

**Cave Preserve Management Plan Review Schedule**

Year	March	June	September	December
2021	Ella Armstrong	Knox	Traino	<b>Sellecks</b>
2022	Bensons	Merlins	[REDACTED]	Onesquethaw
2023	Spider	Clarksville	Salamander	Bentleys
2024	Ella Armstrong	Knox	Traino	Sellecks

Note: I have not heard if there are any proposed changes to the **Sellecks** management plan at this time.

**CAVE PRESERVE REPORTS.**

**Bentleys Cave Preserve (Devon Hedges, Jonah Spivak)**

**Progress:** Trail conditions remain in an acceptable situation. There are two wet areas that need some work to improve drainage. Border marking and trail markers remain in good shape.

**Issues:** The kiosk needs to be replaced. Devon and Jonah have discussed general ideas for this, but no action taken in 2021. The driveway to the parking area is showing deterioration. While still drivable, it needs attention in 2022.

**Plans :** Both managers were not as available in 2021 for projects as we would like. The kiosk and the driveway repair are now top priorities and will be attended to in 2022.

**Bensons Cave Preserve (Luke Mazza)**

**Progress:** Inspected the property on October 16th and put Bensons to bed for the winter. Posted the closure signs and took some measurements on the kiosk posters for future replacement. 11 total permits were issued in 2021, with ~8 of those being utilized for cave visitation. This is up from an all-time low in 2020 of 4 permits and 3 trips. Updated posters featuring the wonderful photography of Erik Nieman are in progress.

**Issues:** None to report.

**Plans:** New posters to replace the faded ones from 2014 are drafted and will be getting those printed soon.

**Clarksville Cave Preserve (Mike Chu, Thom Engel, & Chuck Porter)**

**Progress:** Cave closed signs have been put up. A good start was made on marking the eastern boundary of the preserve. Our neighbor was invited to participate which he did. Assisting in this were Mike Chu, Chuck Porter, Jacob Morris-Siegel, Bob Simmons, and Thom Engel.

**Issues:** Some of our neighbor's posted signs are still on our property. This is in the process of being resolved. The changing area needs to be rebuilt. The current one was constructed in 2004.

**Plans:** We plan to rebuild the changing area. Current scheduled work date is 23 April 2022

**Ella Armstrong Cave Preserve (Erik Nieman)**

**Progress:** Trail maintenance/trees cleared.

**Issues:** Weeds in parking area.

**Plans:** Ongoing project to clear the weeds overtaking the parking area.

**Merlins Cave Preserve (Morgan Ingalls and Ramon Armen)**

**Progress:** There were several trips into the cave in September, including one videography trip as part of Mike Sandone's Caves and Legends series. There have been no known trips into Dragon Bones. Merlins and Dragon Bones are both now closed for winter. There was also one trip to Dome 12 in October, during which the gravel was dug out from the sinkhole to re-expose the top of the culvert. The temporary culvert lid, though destroyed because of being buried in gravel, protected the cave from any debris buildup inside the cave. A large part of the cave was washed clean of dirt and gravel because of the flooding, and the dry side of the cave washed out significantly. The dig project is expected to continue on both the dry side and wet sides of the cave. The data logger that had been placed in the cave in 2019 and recovered earlier this year was given to Jacob Morris-Siegel in order to download the data off of it. This data has not yet been analyzed.

**Problems:** Merlins and Dome 12 both experienced heavy flooding over the summer. In the case of Dome 12, the lower portion of the sinkhole filled up with gravel to a level above the top of the culvert. While enough gravel was removed to re-expose the culvert and re-enter the cave, the lid we had placed on the culvert over the winter suffered damage and will need to be replaced. The top of the culvert was also deformed (but the structural portion of the culvert was unaffected). The kiosk sign is in bad shape and needs replacing. Some property boundary markers need replacing.

**Plans:** Investigate kiosk sign replacement. Continue to look for 36" diameter by 8' long culvert to protect Dome 12 from future flooding; although we might have to wait until supply chain issues clear up and prices drop down. Build a new culvert lid before the Dome 12 sinkhole freezes up for the winter, assuming no culvert is found beforehand. Continue the dig project in Dome 12, provided no bats are found and it stays warm and dry enough. Recover and analyze the data from the data logger. Replace the boundary and trail markers where needed. There also needs to be some surface work to clear up trees that fell across the trail during the storms over the summer and fall. Some of these trees are very large and will require a chainsaw to remove.

\*note I recently downloaded the temp and humidity data from Merlins but have not sent the data to anyone. -Jacob

**Knox Cave Preserve (Mitch Berger)**

**Progress:** The number of permits issued this season stands at 50 by me (five of which were cancelled) plus two Special Use ones (one of which was for the NCRC Level 1 course). Participated in discussion of Engel's new Posted sign proposal. Consulted with Hatfield about progress on and prospects for the sinkhole trail restoration project for the Mtn Dew grant proposal she put together. Worked with NYS DEC to arrange for an equipment maintenance visit for the acoustic monitoring scientific study they're working on with BCI on November 17. Had multiple detailed conversations about planning for the trail restoration project.

**Issues:** Our permitted group on September 29 reported that as they were departing, they encountered an unpermitted group arriving with two vehicles; they didn't manage to obtain plate numbers, and their report arrived two days later, so we were unable to pursue the issue. We do not yet have a final plan or budget for the trail restoration project. The Great Divide rope is [presumably] still there. Engel and Berger still need to investigate what may be poison parsnip plants. The path down the sinkhole is degrading and in need of restoration work (in the process of consultation for planning).

**Plans:** Periodic property inspections. Continue to consult with trail experts on restoration planning. Addition of trail markers and reposting of property. Boundary marking. Removal of the Great Divide rope. Investigation of troublesome plant species. Further attempts at removal of ancient graffiti.

**Onesquethaw Cave Preserve (Thom Engel, Christa Hay, & Ellen Schwartz)**

**Progress:** Cave closed sign has been put back up. We had 16 permitted trips this year. A 17th permit issued but not used. This is up from last year (12). Mean group size was 5.6 persons.

**Issues:** The farmer to the south is using our property to access the fields. He is also our neighbor at the Traino Preserve.

**Plans:** I plan to contact USF&WS regarding a bat-exclusion device for the cave. This might allow winter access.

**Salamander Cave Preserve (Cara Gentry, Erik Richards)**

Bob S. attended an event which included a site walk on a property to the west of the current KLT parcel, which KLT has an option to purchase. No apparent karst expression on this piece was observed. After the walk, which included local and county representatives, a get together was held at a nearby home with neighbors from the Wilbur area as a fund-raiser for the new purchase.

The access easement has been through its final review by KLT and is ready for our approval. Bob had sent out the latest draft to the Board some weeks back.

**Sellecks Cave Preserve (Erik Nieman, Tony Vasile)**

**Progress:** 1. 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 the Onesquethaw Preserve example).

**Issues:** 1. Kiosk is irreparably broken. 2. Kiosk needs new poster with updated information.

**Plans:** 1. Replace kiosk with one stored at Mike Chu's house? (if available). 2. Update contact info for preserve. New informational poster?

**Spider Cave Preserve (Kevin Dumont)**

**Progress:** None to report.

**Issues:** None to report.

**Plans:** Trash collection and creation of a trail along both the base and the top of the escarpment is tentatively planned for the spring/summer of 2022.

**Traino Karst Preserve (Devon Hedges)**

**Progress:** Assembled some supplies, talked with neighbors about visits, marked more trail. Management plan revisions submitted.

**Problems:** Couldn't work for a few weeks recently when I'd otherwise planned to.

**Plans:** Will install a logbook and brochure bin as soon as possible, scheduled workdays on 11/26, 28.

**Stewardship (Jacob Morris-Siegel)**

Several preserve reports mentioned that the kiosks or the material on them were in poor shape or needed to be updated. We should think about coming up with a standard design for the materials we have on our kiosks.

I would like to work with all the preserve managers to bring our boundary marking up to a higher standard. This means flagging, painting, and signing all our lines. I started this at Clarksville. I also want to review our boundary sign language and size.

I also think it is time to get a subscription to Landscape Conservation Software. We had approved this before, but we were not at a place where we could make good use of it.

**OTHER COMMITTEES (PRESIDENT):**

**Acquisitions (Chuck Porter, Bob Simmons)**

Vermont Land Trust, No update since last meeting.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Thook, Has been completed and is now a part of the Clarksville Preserve. New boundaries walked with management team and are being marked to delineate the metes and bounds.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

**Nominating (Norm Berg)**

Norm's report has been emailed to the Board already. The President and the Secretary have each agreed to stand for another term. No other candidates volunteered or were brought forward to the Committee. Note: Based on the term limitations, assuming Mitch and Bob are reappointed, this will be our last two-year term.

**Risk Management (Mitch Berger)**

**Progress:** After the last meeting, collection of the Board's annual Conflict of Interest Disclosure Forms was completed with another round of assistance (and insistence) from the President. Completed annual risk management training required for eligibility for Terrafirma discounts.

**Issues:** None.

**Plans:** Add insurance coverage (G/L and Terrafirma) for: Thook, the KLT property adjacent to Salamander when we execute the mutual easement agreement, and [REDACTED] when the lease is executed. Prepare our Terrafirma renewal application for next year. 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)**

I have had discussions with the Northwest Connecticut Land Conservancy about potentially reopening the cave for limited summer visitation, but have not pushed that very far. I may have a candidate for taking the lead on that situation as I have not been able to spend much time on it.

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

A few issues here: First is the decision that we should unload most of the bat acoustic monitoring units as they are getting older and at some point, will lose their value. We do not presently have a use for so many and keeping a couple to monitor a cave or two, or have them available for loan seems to make the most sense. I have one lead with another environmental consulting firm, and we will also talk them up at NEBWG in January. After discussions concerning grant spending requirements and staffing, we have decided not to pursue funding for the second part of the investigation for this round.

**Governance ad hoc (Devon Hedges)**

No update since last meeting.

**Attachment B  
Vice President's Report**

**Bylaws Committee (Joe Levinson)**  
Nothing to report.

**Education (Thom Engel)**  
Nothing to report.

**Special Use (Thom Engel)**

We had a total of 87 slots reserved for 2021. This is up from 2020 (45) but still below 2019 (135). Of these 86 36 (41%) were issued, 9 (10%) were denied, and 42 (49%) were not pursued. (Some of these were issued and surrendered and some requests were withdrawn before issuance.) Eight of the denials were for the same camp and were related to their failure to provide a Notification of Risk form. The 9th was a request for access during hibernation closure.

Of the 87 slots, 60 were for Clarksville.

A more complete accounting will be done after the first of the year. (I just fielded the filming request.)

We already have 32 slot reservations for 2022. This includes a small, professional filming request in Clarksville Cave.

**Surprise Cave Committee (Al DeMaria)**

I did not do any checkups at Surprise cave in recent months. I am giving up my position as contact person because I can not deal with the red tape; the New Paltz DEC has very little concern for the cave. However, I am willing to help out if Bob Simmons (or whoever is now the main contact for the cave) has any projects needing attention or help on cave matters. Give my name and email address to the person dealing with the cave..

**Thacher Park (Thom Engel)**

I had a lengthy conversation with Bill Hein on several cave related issues. These included discussions on place names in Hailes to the rock fall by Hailes. Notably we talked about cave access.

Staff had discussions about cave management but since no one was asking for access, they figured there was no demand. (My irony alarm was buzzing loudly.) So, if you recall, "Don't ask. Don't tell." This seems to have been, "Don't tell that you may ask." So, regarding recreational caving, excepting Hailes and caves on the Indian Ladder trail all caves in the park are open from May 1 through September 30. (Digging still requires written permission per OPRHP regulations.)

Hailes is sort of open. Bill recommends those wishing to enter Hailes should pre-arrange with him. Cavers **MUST** be fully equipped. Unless working on a science project, they will have to pay the parking fee. They'll need to stop at the visitors' center to get the key, which **MUST** be returned after the trip. The cave is open as of May 1. John Dunham recommends no entry after September 1.

Caves along the Indian Ladder trail have the same rules as Hailes, but there are no gates and no keys and caves may be visited through September 30.

**Cave Protection (Thom Engel)**

No action. Will try to set up a meeting with a local legislator or staff.

**Science Committee (Larry Davis)**

During the period of July 15-November 15, 2021 there were two potential research projects under discussion.

The first of these, a project that that would “place an acoustic detector within the entrance of Knox, preferably before August 15<sup>th</sup>, to monitor bat behavior from the fall swarm to spring emergence.” The project manager appears to be Amanda Adams of Bat Conservation International. No formal proposal was ever submitted to me. However, following an email exchange between me and Bob Simmons, Bob authorized the Knox Cave manager to issue a permit for this work. As the work is currently on-going, I do not have anything further to report. By the way, a copy of the permit was never sent to me.

The second project would date speleothems in some of our caves to “determine when they were growing – and when they were not due to ice sheet cover – during the ice age cycles of the past 500,000 years. This is a critical piece of information to sort out how ice sheets respond to climate change, how climate-tipping points work, and how high sea levels rise in a warmer world.” The project investigators are Dr. Jeremy Shakun of the Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences at Boston College and Dr. David McGee of the Department of Earth, Atmospheric, and Planetary Sciences at MIT.

I was first contacted via email by Dr. Shakun in early April 2021. In the message, he briefly outlined what they wanted to do and asked to talk with me by telephone. We did so on April 15. I discussed the proposal procedure with him and differentiated between what he would have to do for us versus what he would need to do for NSS owned caves. **NOTE: I referred him to the Appendix C of the Board Manual since this is what we have “published”. See suggestions at the end of this report regarding that Appendix.** I found the science he was proposing compelling and encouraged him to prepare a formal proposal. I explained to him what I thought some of the concerns might be and made some suggestions about how he might speak to them. On April 27, 2021, Dr. Shakun submitted a preliminary draft of a proposal. I read it very carefully and responded with suggestions for extensive revisions on 23 May 2021. Note that I did not include others in the loop at this time since no specific caves were mentioned and I did not feel that the proposal was ready yet for consideration by managers and/or Board Members (all lot of this is explained in my memo of 19 October 2021 to Thom Engel-which I also shared with the Board Executive Committee. I am attaching a copy to this report as an appendix).

I received a revised draft from Dr. Shakun on 14 June 2021. After carefully reviewing it, I felt that it was appropriate to solicit comments and suggestions from Board members and property managers. On 26 July, I sent a memo, along with copies of the draft to them requesting comments and suggestions. I received responses from most of the recipients. I lightly edited these and sent them along to Drs. Shakun and McGee on 2 August 2021. They responded that they were encouraged and felt that before completing a final draft (which would be the actual proposal), they needed to visit at least one cave. Paul Rubin was kind enough to take Dr. Shakun (and others?) to Clarksville.

At this point. I am awaiting a final proposal. I have recently touched base with him and here is what he has to say.

Thanks for checking in on this -- it's been on my list to touch base with you, but the fall has flown by. Yes, Paul Rubin took me into Clarksville Cave in September for a first look, and has helped me tune up the proposal a bit, and search for additional sources of speleothems. I'm still working on that a bit, and also need to check in with a few other cave managers to see if they want a separate proposal for every cave, or if we can just submit the one proposal to cover several caves -- in any case, hoping to submit the proposal within a month or two tops. Paul and I thought the best approach would be to propose only taking broken speleothem fragments... and then promise to return with a new proposal if we decide sampling in situ formations might be desirable.

#### COMMENTS, QUESTIONS, SUGGESTIONS:

I feel that this project is advancing nicely. As soon as I get the final proposal, I will forward it to who? There is a problem here. Our published procedures call for Board consideration. I know, however, that the Board approved a new set of procedures some time ago. However, these are not published. They call for approval only by cave managers. However, I feel that this proposal should follow the old (published) procedures. My reasoning is as follows: 1) we have not published the new procedures and it would be inappropriate to require proposers to follow procedures that they cannot see. Furthermore, Shakun and McGee have been following our published procedures and a tremendous amount of work has gone into this. I think that changing the procedure at this point would be onerous and, perhaps, counterproductive. 2) Our “new” procedures seem to envision projects that would take place in a single cave. This project might end up encompassing several of our caves (and perhaps some NSS ones too). The old procedure seems to fit this scenario better. I suggest that we follow that and have the board consider the overall research plan. Then the investigators can work with the individual cave managers on protocols that would be specific to the cave they want to use. This way, they are spared having to produce several long proposals, one for each cave rather than a single one with appendices specific to individual caves which could be approved later.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]



[Redacted]

[Redacted]

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[Redacted]

[Redacted text block]



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	0.00	50.00	0.00	50.00
VP	50.00	0.00	50.00	0.00	50.00
Total Executive	250.00	0.00	250.00	0.00	250.00
Fundraising				200.00	750.00
Grant Expense	0.00	3,599.00	0.00	3,000.00	0.00
Insurance	2,516.00	2,495.06	2,548.00	2,506.06	2,683.00
Legal Fees	1,000.00	0.00	1,000.00	1,472.20	1,500.00
Licenses & Permits	125.00	275.00	125.00	150.00	200.00
Meeting Expense	100.00	0.00	100.00	0.00	100.00
Meetings & Conferences	300.00	135.00	300.00	0.00	300.00
Membership Expenses	125.00	0.00	125.00	0.00	125.00
Miscellaneous	100.00	0.00	100.00	0.00	100.00
NRO expenses				500.00	0.00
Office Expense	100.00	56.00	100.00	76.00	100.00
Postage	100.00	0.00	100.00	7.79	100.00
Preserves-Administration					1,500.00
Preserves-Maintenance					
Bensons	310.00	0.00	200.00	0.00	100.00
Bentleys	160.00	0.00	200.00	0.00	200.00
Clarksville	160.00	0.00	100.00	0.00	1,000.00
Ella Armstrong	160.00	0.00	100.00	0.00	100.00
Knox	160.00	1,000.00	2,060.00	960.00	3,200.00
Merlins	460.00	0.00	100.00	0.00	400.00
Onesquethaw	110.00	0.00	50.00	0.00	50.00
Salamander			600.00	0.00	600.00
Sellecks	160.00	0.00	100.00	0.00	100.00
Spider	160.00	0.00	100.00	0.00	100.00

Traino	360.00	0.00	1,585.00	811.35	800.00
<b>Total Preserves-Maintenance</b>	<b>2,200.00</b>	<b>1,000.00</b>	<b>5,195.00</b>	<b>1,771.35</b>	<b>6,650.00</b>
Promotion	1,500.00	0.00	1,500.00	781.12	1,000.00
Publishing					
Mailings	50.00	0.00	50.00	0.00	50.00
Website	60.00	0.00	60.00	0.00	210.00
<b>Total Publishing</b>	<b>110.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>110.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>260.00</b>
Science	500.00	0.00	500.00	0.00	500.00
Sponsorships	250.00	0.00	250.00	500.00	800.00
Taxes on Properties	300.00	283.33	300.00	524.65	300.00
<b>Total Expense</b>	<b>12,251.00</b>	<b>8,212.26</b>	<b>15,278.00</b>	<b>23,179.87</b>	<b>19,893.00</b>
<b>Net Ordinary Income</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>2,090.85</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>813.16</b>	<b>0.00</b>

**Barn Dance Subcommittee - Emily Davis & Mike Warner:**

**Progress:** Returned most donations. Carrot Barn asked us to hold theirs for next year. All others went back.

**Plans:** Plan for 2022. Hopefully have a barn dance. Will try to set a date summer 2022.

**Problems:** none

**Membership Committee – Riley Drake:**

**Membership Renewals and New Members:** The database is current as of today, December 4th.

**Current Membership Numbers (Change since September 19th, 2021)**

Life: 63 (no change)

Family Life: 9 (no change)

Benefactor: 14 (no change)

Regular Membership: 79 (net +2, +4 new members, -2 non-renewals)

Institutional: 7 (+1)

Total: 172 (+3)

*The above numbers are accurate to the best of my current understanding according to the membership database on December 4th.*

**Future directions/updates:**

(1) Ramon has fixed the PayPal issue! Thank you Ramon!

(2) I have thought about how to clean up the NCC database but have yet to take very drastic measures. I will save a copy of the database as it exists now. Additionally, I am considering migrating the membership database to a more manageable format and welcome any input.

(3) Continue to tell your caving friends that they can join the NCC! I continue to run into several longtime northeast cavers in the past few months that were not aware they could join the NCC.

(4) I'm going to spend much of the next 6 months traveling and in the field so I'm very much looking for someone to be the next membership chair.

**Costs for the year:**

\$94.63 on the Give and Gear Up Website

\$26.10 on postage

\$9.95 on raffle tickets (many more for future years)

\$8.70 on postage for raffle prizes

Total: \$139.38

**Office Committee Report - Emily Davis & Mike Warner:**

**Progress:** Shipped out most of the raffle items and deliver the rest we have on site.

**Plans:** none specifically

**Problems:** None

**Publications – Christa Hay:**

**Problems:** None

**Progress:** Newsletter sent out, mailchimp sent out on donations.

**Plans:** Would really like to see the board members step up and help write an article now and then.

**Technology Committee Report – Mike Chu:**

-Added SSL certificate to the website

-Updated PHP software version on server to avoid "extended support" charges for using an outdated version of the software. Tweaked website so that all modules function correctly with the new version of PHP being used.

-Would like to note that website related fees (site hosting, domain name, SSL certificate) have gone up significantly since when the website budget was last reviewed. Budget for 2022 has been updated to reflect current cost. (However, costs continue to be donated by MHC, so no change to the actual amount of money spent for 2022's budget).

**Volunteer Value Committee – Vince Kappler:**

**Progress:** Year to date totals: 559.5 hours of volunteer work on NCC projects for a total value of \$15,995. Members also reported traveling a total of 933 miles to work on projects.

All VV time reported this cycle is from Zoom meetings and committee persons working from home. This is my first report where we did not have an increase in travel time.

**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 7, 2021, 9:00am**

**Online via Videoconference**

Called to order: 9:10am

Present: M. Berger, T. Engel, B. Simmons, B. Folsom, K. Dumont, L. Hatfield

### **1) Native American acknowledgment**

In Dumont's perusal of educational programming, he came across an episode of PBS's Eons which made a statement about paleontological discoveries that have been made on indigenous people's lands without permission, and now acknowledges these people. While Dumont has no particularly strong convictions about this, he thinks it makes a good deal of sense and is the right thing to do to acknowledge the Native Americans who once lived on or used our land. Folsom asks if we should raise this as a Committee of the Whole topic, and Simmons indicates that we should. Engel wonders if we know which groups to acknowledge, and whether the natives even used the caves. Berger's not so sure that whether they happened to use the caves is terribly relevant, since being on the land we now conserve would seem to count. Hatfield notes that her daughter's high school does make such acknowledgment. This will appear as a topic in Committee of the Whole at the next Board meeting, and Dumont agrees to start off our discussion.

### **2) November 13 Clarksville work day**

Engel just wanted to mention that this work day has been scheduled. The long range forecast calls for showers on that day, so it may end up changing. The plan is to mark the eastern boundary of the property, and in some places, adding more trail markers may be desirable. The plan is to invite our new neighbor [REDACTED], and to work on removing the other Posted signs that have been incorrectly placed on our property. Folsom inquires how many people the Preserve Managers are looking to gather. Engel replies that both Chu and Porter have agreed to attend, and that he's not sure there's actually pressing need for more hands given what the goals are. Berger asks if clearing out the detritus from the huge tree that fell along the edge of the upper gravel lot a couple years ago is in the plans, but Engel reminds him that though we're allowed to use it, that's the parking lot that doesn't belong to us and so this isn't really in our purview. Simmons asks if there's other maintenance to be done, and Engel tells us that reconstruction of the changing area is going to be necessary, but that it'll be scheduled for a later time. He also says that he's obtained boundary markers from the Office Committee.

### **3) Pros and cons of 100% virtual meetings**

Engel raised this topic to have us consider the mode of our meetings moving forwards, as it seems that in-person may be becoming possible again. He understands the value of an in-person meeting, much of which lies in the ability to schmooze with people and find out what they've been up to. However, he also feels that virtual meetings would allow us to continue to draw talent, resources, and participation from a larger geographic area in terms of Board membership. As an example, he suggests that there may be someone in western New York who couldn't face the prospect of a long drive to come to a Board meeting (Berger, sitting 10 minutes outside of Boston, was quite confused at the example given of "too far a distance."). He wonders if we should have a Committee of the Whole topic to discuss this. Berger asks that we be cautious about softening the apparent commitment being asked of a prospective candidate for a Board position, not because everyone should be forced to drive long distances, but because various folks have at times expressed unhappiness when there are folks who run for the Board and then don't pursue efforts to further the NCC's work beyond attending the Board meetings, and if that simply becomes a thing you can open up a computer at home and do, this may lead to us seeing a larger number of future Board members not making as much of their opportunity to lead the organization as many of us would like. Dumont asks if we have a list of Board member requirements in the Board manual. Engel responds that they have to attend meetings either themselves or by proxy, and Berger adds that other expectations aren't specifically articulated (and laments that we might actually need to spell out "we expect you to do more than attend 4 meetings a year if you're involved in leadership of the NCC."). Folsom doesn't feel that we need to have a Committee of the Whole discussion about the meetings, and Berger agrees - he feels that it's become quite clear (notably from the benefit we've had from Ingalls's meeting participation during the pandemic despite having moved away, and that we hope to continue to have from Hatfield despite her in-progress move) that even once we return to having in-person meetings, we'll need to continue to provide an option for remote participation. This most likely means that we won't really be able to have outdoor meetings until we have a good tool that can deal with wind and other background noise, as a laptop on Zoom doesn't usually work well for outdoor groups. But a laptop indoors can work, and conference rooms with teleconferencing setups work very well, and we may at some point end up with one of the portable devices that works well outdoors.

### **4) "Posted" signs**

Engel has begun to draft and circulate for comments a customized "Posted" sign for our preserves that make explicit statements defining entry into a cave without proper gear as trespassing, and likewise defines entry between certain dates as trespassing. The issue he's trying to address is that at present, for the non-permit caves, when some unprepared spelunker goes into one of our caves, there's little legal recourse we have because we can't actually charge them with trespassing. Similarly, while entering during the hibernation season may be a violation of the Endangered Species Law, that's hard for us to enforce, and trespassing isn't something we can technically have them charged with. Berger points out that fixed language such as he's drafted doesn't really work for a place like Knox, as it implies (though technically doesn't state) that it's acceptable to enter the cave (and not trespassing) if you do so during the dates between when the NLEB-mandated closure ends and when Knox's broader hibernation closure primarily for the Little Browns ends. Engel states that he isn't really ready to answer those objections just yet, but also notes that the permit caves (which include Knox) don't really need a special sign like this; any old sign indicating the requirement of holding a permit suffices to make a trespassing charge a possibility. One of the particular examples in Engel's mind is that in the case of the incident a couple winters ago at Bentleys, we wouldn't have been able to act on our own, and had to rely on the DEC, but they didn't end up prosecuting. Berger

reminds us that we didn't wish to have the DEC prosecute, and in fact chose not to turn over to the DEC the identities of the group in question, as we chose what we felt was a more constructive educational path. Engel will research the idea a bit more.

#### **5) NYSCPP grant updates (applications due December 15)**

Simmons discussed with Ingalls the idea of trying to conduct "part 2" of the Human Influences research study, and neither of them really has the time to handle it right now given current constraints. Berger asks whether not applying for the funding to work on it this cycle will affect our ability to do so in a future year (and asks whether we think we may want to). Simmons responds that we don't know, and that we don't know, respectively. Berger is specifically a bit concerned that, because the first year of the project was heavy on data collection and light on analysis, and the planned second year would've produced most of the publishable results, there may end up being the perception that we didn't deliver on the project, which might impact our prospects of receiving other grants in the future. Simmons says that he and Ingalls concluded that we probably need to find a grad student to help deliver the results for the second phase of the project. Berger notes that not just NYSCPP, but other grant-awarding entities like the Cave Conservancy Foundation do offer funding for work by graduate students. Simmons also tells us that there will be two transaction grants going in this cycle: one for the Salamander acquisition (which still qualifies, as we hadn't closed on it during the previous cycle), and the Clarksville extension. He needs to talk with our attorney to make sure that we have all the bills for Clarksville before putting together that application; the Salamander application just needs to be dusted off from last time.

#### **6) NYS unique geological features and NYS geological travel map update**

Simmons tells us that he hasn't heard anything regarding motion on this bill. Engel says that it had still not been signed by the Governor as of the last time he checked. Berger asked what became of the letter that Engel put together an initial draft of, and Simmons says that he made an editing pass over it, and sent it off. We'd been hoping that the NSS AVP would do the same; Simmons is unsure whether that happened. Engel believes the next step is to keep checking if it becomes law, and if so, then we talk with the DEC about keeping us in the loop as the relevant committee forms to decide on sites that will be on the official list.

#### **7) Kingston Land Trust / NCC Mutual Easement**

Simmons sent a draft around seeking comment. We had some spirited discussion about why the minimum specs for the trail require it to pass by Salamander Cave on the NCC side, but not Tree Cave on the KLT side (essentially because it's in the quarry area, which is somewhat of a hazard), whether some of the verbiage actually means that we'd be unable to seek an access easement to cross the CSX right-of-way that divides our property if we ever wanted to do so, and a couple details about the way the insurance requirements are worded.

#### **8) Jack Packers lease**

Dumont tells us that we haven't heard anything back from [REDACTED] regarding the proposed lease document that we sent him to review, but that there's been some activity at the preserve (including surveying), and that there's some evidence of bats there.

#### **9) Onesquethaw winter bat protection device**

Berger wanted to check in on whether we've made progress with attempts to pressure the USFWS to respond to indicating intent to pursue installation of the device and keeping the cave open for visitation over the winter. Engel says that he will pursue it with the USFWS and will contact C. Herzog.

#### **10) Traino Preserve amphipod presence determination**

This item was listed to check in on the biological inventory requirements for the transaction grant we received for this acquisition. Simmons tells us that Morris-Siegel has provided him with the data we needed to fulfill the grant obligations, although it might be nice to conduct a more thorough inventory at some point.

#### **11) NYSCPP acoustic detectors**

Davis deferred to Ingalls on what to do about the retention or disposition of the detectors, and so Simmons and Ingalls discussed it. They've decided to hold on to a couple of the detectors and get rid of the rest. Shortly after that conversation, he had lunch with a former coworker who now has a consulting firm that uses the SM4Bats on a regular basis. He's reached out to the fellow who coordinates their use of acoustic monitors and asked to discuss the possibility of them acquiring our surplus equipment.

#### **12) Positions needing to be filled (Fundraising)**

Berger mentions that during a conversation he had with Hatfield during his NCKMS trip to discuss the Knox sinkhole project and the Mtn Dew grant application she was working on, Hatfield indicated interest in taking on the formal Fundraising Chair role! Hatfield, present at this meeting, confirmed that Berger was not pulling everyone's leg. Berger asks if there are other positions we've forgotten about. Folsom mentions that Levinson has been attending NSF meetings in the context of perhaps taking on leadership of the NCC's Investment Committee, and wonders if we want to get others involved in the committee. And we note that the Legal Committee chair is vacant, though that doesn't seem super-pressing to fill.

#### **13) Vermont Land Trust Memorandum of Understanding**

Simmons hasn't spoken with Armen about this recently, so there's no update available.



#### **14) Salamander still isn't on the website**

We'd noted some meetings back that it was a publicity problem that we'd been fundraising for and then making announcements about new preserves like Traino and Salamander, and yet they weren't on the website. Traino is now, but Salamander is still conspicuously missing. Simmons notes that it's also not on our brochures. Berger comments that he and Nieman run through a surprising amount of brochures at the Knox and Ella preserves, and that he, Drake, and Rubin just gave away a whole lot of them at NCKMS last week, so if there's a desire to revise them, perhaps that should happen sooner rather than later before we run a large print job of the old ones. Simmons indicates that Gentry had plans to try to flesh out a preserve webpage for Salamander and work with Armen. Engel agrees that Salamander should be on our website, but adds a side note that some other organizations, for example Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy, have properties that they own and that are not shown as preserves on their websites.

#### **15) Website modernization**

Berger reports that the ad-hoc group this project was assigned to hasn't met yet, though multiple of the involved parties (himself and Armen) have been involved in other ad-hoc group meetings to work on fundraising projects, and there's only so much available time. Simmons suggests that we may need a group meeting to proofread all the pages. Folsom says that he'd defer to Berger, but he thought we were discussing rearchitecting the site rather than just combing through the data on all the existing pages. Hatfield wonders if the page where all of the preserves are currently listed with a few bullet points should hide the caves that are currently closed.

#### **16) Board Manual updates**

Engel placed this topic on the list in response to comments made by the Science Coordinator about the fact that the posted Manual describes our previous research proposal approval process rather than the revised one adopted some time ago in an effort to streamline the process. Berger asks if there's anything here to really add to the discussion that the Board had on this topic at the last meeting, and Engel indicates that there isn't. Berger, deciding that this is as good a time as any to mention other thoughts he's had while planning to deal with the long overdue Manual updates, points out that were the Manual to be brought up to date presently, it would contain a significant amount of confidential information that we have been much more careful about redacting from our other published documents since the last time regular Manual updates were being posted. Of particular note, it contains all Acts of the Board, which necessarily include the motions related to land acquisition deals that have not been completed. Berger is more generically confused and concerned about why anyone is presenting to non-NCC people (like researchers) the document that's supposed to instruct our internal staff about how to operate, but given that we're also discussing a document that is intended to contain information which is Board-confidential, we seem to have a bit of a problem if we post it on the website. Engel asks about the possibility of having a members-only website. While Berger indicates that we *could* do this, he also notes that a common shared password (often used for such things) will fail to keep any sensitive documents confidential because everyone will simply share the password. The alternative, having individual user accounts, is a more complicated endeavor to setup, maintain, and keep safe. He notes that for quite a while, we've really needed some online data storage platform not just for the Manual, but also for archival of the official unredacted forms of our minutes, as the current solution of delivering hardcopies to the Office Committee to lock up in a safe works, but isn't really ideal. Possibilities for this could include Dropbox, or perhaps the Landscape conservation management software Morris-Siegel was looking into some years back. Folsom asks about the portal Simmons's company has and whether they'd allow us to use it and if it would fit the need. Simmons responds that their portal isn't really a great tool for long-term storage, and Berger wonders about the longevity of its availability were we to use it once Simmons eventually retires. Berger recalls that we didn't go forward with Landscape when Morris-Siegel was originally investigating it because he'd assessed that it had quite a steep learning curve. Folsom inquires whether it's particularly important for people other than the Stewardship Coordinator to cope with that learning curve. Berger is under the impression that in order for it to have the utility we'd hoped, it would be important for property managers to be using it as well to store things like inspection reports, etc. Now that Morris-Siegel is formally in the new Stewardship Coordinator position, we'll inquire about his thoughts on it again.

#### **17) Officer reviews**

Berger placed this topic here to check in on whether there's any news about this process happening, since the reviews didn't happen at the September Board meeting, and the plan at the time was that the Trustees would do something with us between that meeting and the upcoming one. Simmons hasn't heard anything on the topic lately.

#### **18) Officer continuity planning**

As our President and Secretary are rapidly approaching what will be their final consecutive terms (if they're reelected in December), we really need to work on addressing the issue of continuity planning, as we've realized several times before. Berger added this topic because he feels that we should be coming up with some sort of a process that's more than just finding our own successors, since there's no guarantee that the Trustees will end up selecting the same person. Simmons agrees, and tells us (though this does not surprise us) that the learning curve for his position was very steep. Folsom doesn't disagree at all, but notes that Simmons took over from someone who kept things very close to the vest. Simmons feels that we need to work on job descriptions, and Folsom recalls that we've done some of this, and asks if Hedges has what we'd previously worked on. Berger reminds us that N. Berg actually has those descriptions, and uses them for the annual officer candidate solicitations. However, he points out that though they contain a list of responsibilities, it lacks instruction on how to carry out the job. Given what appeared to be the Board's great surprise at just how complicated and immense a task preparing the meeting agenda is when Berger described how he goes about it at a meeting some years

ago, Berger worries about what will happen when he passes on his responsibilities. Simmons, too, worries about what will happen when he passes his position on, and notes that he supposes he brought this problem on himself by insisting on term limits when he came on board. To be clear, while the difficulty of figuring out how to allow for continuity and limiting how long one person can hold a position is significant and of our own making, all of the officers are of the belief that it's a problem worth solving, and not one that we regret having - it's important for the long-term health of the organization. Simmons points out that some organizations have a shadowing structure where the incoming officer will watch and work with the outgoing one. Engel thinks that the Board, rather than the Officers alone, needs to drive this process, perhaps by pre-electing or selecting our successors. Simmons wonders if this simply means that if his presidency will be up in '23, then at the end of '22, the Board finds the next person to shadow him for a year. Hatfield suggests that perhaps the shadowing could be put on the back-end; that is, when a new person is elected, they're in the titled position, but the departing officer is kept in the shadow for perhaps 6 months or something along those lines. Berger is concerned about this, because it relies on an assumption that the current officers will be willing to continue doing the work even once they're done with their positions (and also because it assumes that officer terms will always complete normally, with nobody either leaving over a difference that causes them to split from the organization, or because of some life-changing event that takes them away unexpectedly). Engel thinks we need to make this a topic of discussion for the Board, and Simmons is not sure whether the Trustees all see the upcoming cliffs. Berger feels that even if the Trustees do drive the process, which would be wonderful, we the current officers need to help design the training program, which means we'll need to do a lot of documentation, training, shadowing, attending meetings, etc.

### **19) Knox sinkhole trail restoration**

Berger reported that he's gotten positive responses about interest in helping to assess and/or plan from both C. Gentry and his friend who's an alumnus of SUOC, and who took an initial look at the sinkhole during the recent NRO2.0 event. They had a lengthy discussion about next steps while Berger was at NCKMS, much of which Berger relayed to Hatfield as she was working on the Mtn Dew grant proposal. A further site visit to take some measurements and try to quantify necessary materials will hopefully happen later this month in time to inform the budget proposal. Simmons notes that KLT has been using a trail design and construction firm named Tahawus Trails, LLC, and that we could probably have them come out to our site and take a look. Folsom also notes that a friend of J. Dunham's is the CEO of the Jolly Rovers Trail Crew, which has done work for Minnewaska State Park with stone steps. Simmons also recalls hearing of a Student Conservation Association crew that was looking for projects to work on a couple of years back, and will need to dig through old contact info.

### **20) Donation box hosting options**

Berger wanted to check if we'd gotten any word on whether prospective sites we'd considered asking to host the donation box for a little while were interested. Engel reports that both Natural Stone Bridge and Caves and Secret Caverns are closed for the season at this point.

### **21) Give and Gear Up**

The event is about to end, and while it was down to the wire, we made our goal, and are very excited! For the future, Folsom thinks we'll need to work on our campaign plan and marketing schedule. Berger notes that there was a very striking pattern where each time he tried shaking a tree (grotto, etc.), it seemed to "work," but only result in one donation, and that he's not sure why that was the case. Folsom explains that the rule of thumb is that in order to get a bunch of interested people in a group to participate in something like this, they need to hear about it six different times before they'll get around to actually acting on their intent to enter the event. We also discussed a tax-related issue - Berger was surprised that when he entered the raffle (just before it ended), he received an automated e-mail from Give Lively that presented the usual charitable donation tax deduction letter on our behalf, stating that no goods or services were received in exchange for the contribution. In the group's discussions prior to the event launch when we were proofreading materials, Berger had wondered whether we'd need to worry about providing such letters ourselves, and after doing a small bit of research, learned that in fact the IRS considers raffle entries to be completely non-deductible and deems you have received exactly as much value as you paid to enter. Thus, no such letters are supposed to be provided, and it's incorrect to say that no goods or services were received, and anyone who deducts raffle tickets bought from a charity and gets audited will be penalized for having taken a deduction. Thus, we believe that we need to send out a followup communication to correct the misunderstanding that may have been caused by the incorrect letter that Give Lively sent. Hatfield will work on another thank-you e-mail that can be sent to all of the entrants including the correction.

### **22) Project Guestbook**

Berger reported that he's given the passive-fundraising-electronic-guestbook-preserve-kiosk-QR-code endeavor "Project Guestbook" for simplicity, and that the group had its initial meeting the week after the last Board meeting as planned. It went well, and they identified the components of the project that will need to happen in order to launch it. Hatfield has already produced a visual mockup of a guestbook entry submission webpage, and a couple different mockups of what the physical add-on to the kiosks might look like, which she also showed at this meeting. Armen will convert the guestbook entry mockup into an actual webpage. Berger is drafting the followup e-mail that will be sent a couple days after someone submits a guestbook entry. Drake will be helping to review, proof, and edit what we produce. We'd planned to have a checkin meeting a month afterwards, which would've fallen the week leading up to NCKMS. Berger did send a scheduling poll for it, but as only Hatfield replied, he had much last-minute prep work for his NCKMS talk, and realized that it was likely Drake did as well, he decided to let the meeting slip and will follow up on it later.

### **23) Mtn Dew grant proposal**

Hatfield did a thorough job putting together the submission, sent it out for some initial feedback, reaching Berger during the conference he was away at, and had a good discussion with him during the lunch break one day about scope and plans for the Knox sinkhole restoration project that this grant may be used for. After another round of revisions, she sent it around again for feedback, and Simmons thinks it looks like it's ready for primetime. Hatfield agrees and will be submitting it later today.

### **24) Annual membership letter**

Berger reminds us that after last year, we said we'd remind ourselves that we absolutely must get this letter out the door this year. Simmons says that it's not on his radar yet, but that it really needs to be. Berger thinks that in order to have an impact and give enough time for people to make end-of-tax-year donations, the appeal letter needs to show up a week or two into December. Simmons plans to work on it over Thanksgiving weekend. Berger also reminds him that the rest of us can help with the mechanics of mailing letters if that becomes the roadblock. He also wonders if we should acknowledge our donors, perhaps in the newsletter, as many organizations (including, for example, the NSS) do. There had been some talk of potentially doing this for donors above some threshold, but Engel asks if this really should be an all-or-none thing, because small amounts for the NCC may be major amounts for some donors. Simmons worries about the possibility of us missing some people if we try to acknowledge everyone. However, Folsom indicates that he has good tracking of donations going several years back (except for the recent Give Lively contributions, but Drake has that).

### **25) NCKMS recap**

The conference actually occurred, in person, despite both the pandemic and the untimely flooding of the scheduled venue on the Friday before the event, causing a last minute plea to the entire list of registrants for anyone who knew of other local venues where the conference could be held! Though we were a mid-level cosponsor, a few weeks before the conference, Berger noticed the absence of our logo on the website and contacted the organizing chairperson to inquire about it. The disappointing response was that he'd never gotten word that our check arrived, and that as a result, though he immediately fixed the missing logo on the website, acknowledgment of our cosponsorship was also missing from the programs and from the conference banner, and he would not be able to correct that. This was rather stunning, given that weeks prior to this, Berger had received from the sponsor coordinator another "thank you for being a cosponsor" message, inviting us to submit additional talks if we desired. The chair offered that to try to make up for it, he'd be sure to specifically mention us as well as a cosponsor who'd signed up rather late in his opening remarks, and that we'd of course be included in the proceedings. What was said in the opening remarks was "big shout out to our cosponsors!" and none of us were mentioned. Simmons and Folsom are rather displeased to hear this, and after Berger explained that he didn't see what good could have come of making a big stink of it at the time, Simmons suggests that perhaps Berger should simply relay the story to Davis at some point.

Berger tells us that Drake gave a well-received talk on some of her research on Tuesday afternoon, leading to multiple offers of additional sites for her to conduct studies at. Rubin presented two posters at the poster session - one on the Clarksville geological trail under planning, and the other was a reprisal of his older WNS poster. Unfortunately, because the venue we were relocated to had multiple events at it during the week, there wasn't sufficient space for the posters to be up for more than one day, so they weren't available to get the level of attention they ordinarily would've at a week-long conference. Berger gave his talk on the piece-by-piece acquisition and protection of Clarksville Cave as the very final talk on Friday of the conference, fortunately to a room that still looked mostly full. This also went over well, and he was subsequently asked if he'd be willing to give the same talk for the Missouri Caves and Karst Conservancy sometime in March.

We had a sponsor booth. Sadly, for the same reason as above - being relocated to a smaller venue - the booths weren't able to be in the same room as the sessions, and so people couldn't peruse them while attending sessions, and they couldn't be staffed - they simply lined the walls in the hallway. Inability to staff the booth and continually interact with passers-by ate into our ability to hype the Give and Gear Up Raffle at the event. Nonetheless, we did get a couple of contributions, and the booth looked well-appointed alongside our neighbors. We also got a few photos of our delegation behind the booth for an upcoming newsletter article.

Of other note, George Veni gave a keynote discussing NCKRI, and we learned during this talk that the International Year of Caves and Karst - which had been 2021, and which we'd planned to participate in, but essentially dropped due to not being enthusiastic about planning an online event and not being able to plan an in-person one during the pandemic - has been extended through 2022. See the next topic. G. Schindel also pulled Berger aside at the end of the conference to discuss restoration of the NSS's Northeast Cave Preserve Fund and checking that all of the money that'd had been donated for the replacement of the Gage Cabin had been properly accounted for. Though this isn't really an NCC topic, this sort of thing is one of the great benefits of networking at conferences, and Berger relayed the messages to Simmons, who will follow up while wearing his NSS hats.

### **26) International Year of Caves and Karst**

As revealed in the topic immediately above, this event has been extended throughout 2022. Our Board had originally voted to sign up as participants, and agreed to plan one or more events during 2021 as part of IYCK, but we decided not to pursue it some meetings back when the pandemic meant that our only possibilities would be some sort of virtual events, and nobody was enthusiastic about yet

more virtual meetings. Berger now asks whether we think we should consider participating in 2022 as we'd originally hoped to in 2021. Engel says that we should, and so Berger will place a topic in Committee of the Whole at the upcoming Board meeting.

27) [REDACTED]

**28) Jake Moon landowner update**

Simmons reports that it has been sold to the restaurant folks who own Maple on the Lake, which is colocated with the brewery that made Knox Cave Ale. It's going to be a largely take-out business. Folsom points out that we already know the brewery people, and wonders if perhaps we should look into having some "welcome to the neighborhood" sort of thing for them. Simmons also thinks the caving community may be more amenable to patronizing the new restaurant.

**29) Acquisitions**

[REDACTED]

**30) NCC Swag**

Berger notes that in looking at the other cosponsor booths at NCKMS, it became fairly apparent that we're the odd ones out at various of these networking events we set up at in that we don't come with a bunch of handout swag for people who come by our booth. Since we're getting better known and participating at more conferences, he thinks that we need to have some handout swag. He also thinks that we need to produce some hats that have our nice logo on them instead of "NCC" which nobody who isn't already familiar with us will know the meaning of. Folsom agrees 100% with both of the things Berger thinks we need to get. He suspects that decals and lanyards are likely candidates for free handout swag, but suggests that Berger talk with Davis about what would be best to get and from where. Simmons asks about the next point where these may be relevant. We think we're looking at NASBR in Texas in August, and NEBWG more locally sometime around March.

### **31) NSF Contract**

[REDACTED]

### **32) Plans for our properties to turn over to the NSS should we fail**

Simmons has had preliminary discussions about the concept with Adam Weaver (NSS AVP), but hasn't followed up with a Memorandum of Understanding yet. This is on the to-do list.

### **33) IRS 990s**

The pause on the penalty we received notice about for our 2019 return on October 19 just ended (it's now 100 days from August) and Folsom hasn't been able to reach anyone at the IRS for weeks - the phone tree hangs up after saying that they're too overloaded to handle the call volume. A. Wolf has been under water, though we've sent in our Form 8868 by mail. Folsom informed Wolf that he'd be traveling out of town and needed the 2020 return done before 11/15. It was sent in the mail yesterday. The NYS Charities Bureau annual submission is also due 11/15 (which is another reason the taxes needed to be done by then); Simmons still needs to DocuSign that filing.

### **34) Report scheduling and December meeting venue**

Folsom suggests that we poll the Board about what we're comfortable with. Berger notes that even if we hold it in person, we'll have to make provisions for people to participate remotely. He also notes that he's currently in mask-indoors-always mode, and that the dining room at Speleobooks doesn't really lend itself to 13+ people spreading out 6 feet away from each other. Folsom asks how large the HRP conference room is, and Simmons says that it can seat 100 people. Folsom doesn't really think that Speleobooks would be terribly upset if we weren't there for the meeting, and Simmons agrees. He will e-mail the Board with a quick feeler about what people would like to do. Officers need reports to them by 11/22, Berger needs the officer sections by 11/29, and the meeting is on 12/5.

### **35) 2022 Budget**

Folsom offers us a broad picture of where things look like they're going to stand at the end of the year after putting all the numbers in. We brought in more income than we had budgeted for, but expenses were also more than we budgeted for. Ordinary income was down \$2,300, but we still end up up by \$1,600 for the year because of the funds invested with the NSF even though we overspent. We're not done getting in the money from the Give Lively campaign. Folsom isn't sure about expenses for next year, but this year we had a lot of costs from surveying. Simmons reminds us that the \$5,000 donation to KLT will be triggered as a result of signing the easement contract in December. Folsom plans to ask for input on the budget at the same time as we solicit committee reports. He also asks what special items we're aware of. The ones we come up with on the spot are the Landscape conservation management software, the Knox trail restoration project, new swag, trail and boundary markers, and the reconstruction of the Clarksville changing area.

### **36) Newsletter**

We need to keep talking about how to get content. Berger wonders if we can do something to incentivize contributing articles. Perhaps free raffle tickets for submitted articles? Folsom suggests the idea of "swag points" articles earn you that can be used towards obtaining the nicer NCC swag items. He notes that the Publisher ought to be finding content, and the Publicity Committee should also be producing press releases for our last two preserve acquisitions, etc. We'll try to redouble efforts of some sort to get content.

### **37) Trail and boundary markers**

We'll need to address these in the budget.

End: 4:09pm