

Minutes from the December 5, 2011, board meeting of the Howard Astronomical League (HAL)

The meeting was convened at 7:00 P.M. at the “Pasta Blitz” restaurant in Ellicott City.

The meeting was attended by President Bob Prokop, Observatory Chair Joel Goodman, Webmaster Chas Rimpo, Events Coordinator David Stein, Past President Wayne Baggett, Members Joan Grindell and Tony Matesi, and Secretary David Illig.

Bob said that we need to begin planning for the transit of Venus, which will occur on the evening of June 5, 2012. He suggested that we should hold a public event at the Robinson Nature Center. David Illig wondered if the terrain at Robinson is suitable, as a good view of the western horizon will be required. David Stein suggested that Tuckahoe State Park might be a good location from which to view the event. It was agreed that we will have to run computer and/or planetarium simulations using the Nature Center to determine whether it will be a suitable location.

Joel said that the Howard County Western Regional Maintenance Facility to which we moved the observatory dome on 4 December will be open from 06:30 to 17:00, seven days a week, through March, after which it will be open until 22:00. When the weather permits we are going to have to do some repairs to the dome base ring, especially removal of hardened Styrofoam from its previous installation. David and Leona Illig will visit the dome with tools to explore which tools and methods will best do the job.

On the subject of the observatory, Joel said that he is conducting meetings with county officials on minor items such as lightning protection and the need to guard against people bumping their heads on the dome while using the telescope. The county will do all it can do to accommodate us, but public safety must also be ensured. During members-only events at the observatory HAL will have control over outside lighting; during public events we will have to provide some degree of outside lighting for public safety. The county now estimates that ground breaking will not take place until July or August of 2012. We can continue to hold private and public observing in the pavilion area during construction. Bob asked when we could expect first light in the observatory and Joel said probably in 2012.

The annual Howard County Greenfest will be held at Howard Community College on Saturday, April 14. David Stein usually manages HAL participation in Greenfest, but Bob Prokop will take David's place this year.

Bob wondered if we should offer HAL observing certificates analogous to the Astronomical League certificates in order to encourage HAL members to participate in winter-time observing. Bob will present a plan at the January meeting.

January elections: We have candidates for all positions except secretary. Wayne will run for one of the vice-president/publicity openings.

Bob adjourned the meeting at 7:50 P.M.

David Illig

Secretary