

HAL Planning Minutes for 6/6/2011

Minutes from the June 6, 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, Treasurer Peter Friedman, Webmaster Chas Rimpou, Observatory Chair Joel Goodman, Event Coordinator David Stein, Past President Wayne Baggett, Member Gary Ingle, and Secretary David Illig.

Bob said that the June meeting was bumped from a conference due to double-booking of the meeting space by Recreation and Parks and HAL was forced to meet in the auditorium. He said he is looking forward to the time when we begin meeting at the Robinson Nature Center. Joel said that Howard County Executive Ken Ulman said that he is looking forward to having us and other not-for-profits use the Robinson Nature Center. Joel said that the grand opening would be held on September 10, 2011. Wayne asked whether we want to offer solar observing during the grand opening and the board agreed that we will do so.

The general membership has approved moving our meetings to the Robinson Nature Center and it is therefore board policy that we will do so.

Chas brought up the subject of Café Press, saying that we can now be penalized financially for not selling enough. There was some discussion on the quality of the merchandise offered by Café Press and there was agreement that the quality is not very good—not as good as it used to be. Wayne moved that we look for an alternative source for club logo merchandise. The secretary seconded the motion and the board agreed that the various board members would do some web searching to look for an alternative. Peter said that in two years has received about \$30 in income from Café Press. The secretary wondered whether, given the lack of member interest in logo merchandise, we should discontinue offering it. The board agreed that we should raise the issue at the July general meeting and get the views of the membership.

Joel said that the annual Celestial Searchers picnic will be held at Alpha Ridge on Aug 6, the same date as a HAL star party.

Peter raised the issue of star Party etiquette; apparently some members are not aware of the need not to disturb others with light spill-over, particularly from laptops. Bob said that he will raise this matter at the next general meeting. Joel has an information packet on the

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subject. It was also agreed that we should post a periodic reminder on the Yahoo group. The subject of laser pointers also came up. There was some discussion, but no consensus on a policy on the user of laser pointers at HAL star parties.

David Stein said there would be a solar star party on Saturday, June 11.

Bob asked for observatory news. Joel said that he has given plans for the pier to the structural engineer. Howard County will require us to use “Hardie Board” siding for fire proofing. Home Dome in Gaithersburg, manufacturers of the dome, will assist with the dome. We need volunteers to take charge of the dome. The dome is currently stored at the home of Mike Hall, and Marc Feuerberg has also been involved with it. The volunteers are needed to move it to a storage facility that the county will provide and to inspect and inventory the parts of the dome and inspect the condition of the gaskets. The dome has never been used, i.e., has never been assembled.

The question of naming the observatory arose. Wayne said it could be named after the 18th century Maryland astronomer, Benjamin Banneker. Banneker achieved fame through being America’s first African-American astronomer and through his work on surveying the District of Columbia. There was no decision on the naming of the observatory, other than the agreement that it should be named after a Maryland astronomer.

Bob will write a thank-you letter to Joe Rutter for his cooperation on lighting issues related to land development near Alpha Ridge.

Bob asked if we are becoming an advocacy group by speaking publicly about lighting issues. Joel said that we are, but there is nothing wrong with that. We do not take sides on political issues or endorse candidates, and advocacy is a legitimate function of a 501(c)3 organization. The IDA is a tax-exempt advocacy group, for example. Joel said that he would contact BGE to gauge their willingness to advocate dark-sky-friendly lighting fixtures.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:05 P.M.

David Illig
Secretary