

## **BBAA Meeting Minutes**

February 4, 2010

The February meeting was called to order at 7:35 PM in room JC-13, TCC new science building, Virginia Beach campus, by president Mark Gerlach.

Those in attendance were Neill Alford, Bruce Bodner, Kenny Broun, Cheryl Colvin, Zachery Colvin, Bryan Condrey, Courtney Flonta, Tony Flonta, José Geldi, Mark Gerlach, Jeff Goldstein, Chuck Jagow, Karen Jagow, Curt Lambert, Matt McLaughlin Bill McLean, Bill Newman, Bill Powers, George Reynolds, Kevin Swann, "Bird" Taylor, and Larry Wade.

Reports: It was moved, seconded, and approved that the reading of the January meeting minutes be waived, since they are posted on the BBAA Web site, [www.backbayastro.org](http://www.backbayastro.org). Secretary George Reynolds announced that the club currently has 99 active members, but that those whose membership extended through 12/31/2009 were in danger of having their membership expire. The normal 30-day grace period for paying club dues was extended another month to the end of February, due to the transition of secretary duties. Treasurer Chuck Jagow reported that as of the meeting date there is \$3224.07 in the Scholarship Fund and \$4504.59 in the General Fund, for a total of \$7728.66. Vice President Courtney Flonta reported on upcoming outreach events. She announced that tomorrow's (2/5/10) Skywatch has been cancelled due to the extreme wetness of the observing field at Northwest River Park. The Greenbrier Elementary School Science Night has been postponed until April. The new date is yet to be announced. Nightwatch is scheduled for Feb. 13 (dusk to whenever), Garden Stars for Feb. 19 (7-9 PM), and Bayside Library Astronomy for Feb. 24 (7-9 PM).

Ted Forte reported on the status of the RRRT (Rapid Response Robotic Telescope). The computer is down, on account of the snowstorm last weekend, and must be manually reset. He said that Dr. Salgado wants to initiate a coordinated NEO search effort as soon as possible. The process involves repeatedly imaging an imaginary grid in the sky and then searching for objects that move. The "core" team of current volunteers can write the scripts and program the scope. However, we are eager to recruit more BBAA volunteers to examine the collected images with software (PinPoint or other astrometric software) to look for moving objects. Ted also reported that Dr. Salgado is looking for innovative ideas on how the RRRT might be used to track fast-moving near-earth objects (NEOs), which would not remain on the standard "grid" images long enough to be detected. Matt McLaughlin added that he and Dr Salgado recently conducted a test asteroid search and submitted the required data to the Minor Planet Center. As a result, the observatory has now obtained its MPC ID number and can submit automated reports.

Old Business: No information is yet available, according to Chuck Jagow, regarding the VAAS conference or BBAA's time to host it. Chuck also stated that the Boardwalk Astronomy dates have been set, and that he will forward the confirmation email to the other officers.

New Business: The new officers must get together and meet at BB&T bank at Greenbrier to sign new signature cards. A motion was made, seconded, and approved that the July BBAA picnic be scheduled for Saturday, July 17.

President Mark Gerlach related the news from *Sky & Telescope* that NASA's Mars rover Spirit has essentially become a Mars "lander", having been stuck in the sand on Mars since April 2009. NASA hopes to use the stable platform to learn whether Mars has a "wobble" on its axis, and thus determine the structure of the core of the Red Planet. Mark also mentioned *S&T's* report that asteroid Vesta will pass between two stars in the constellation Leo (Gamma Leonis, a.k.a. "Algieba" and 40 Leonis) on the night of 16-17 February.

After the business session, Mark presented the latest "Sky at Night" program with Sir Patrick Moore. The title was, "The Winter Sky", and highlighted winter objects for visual astronomy. Also mentioned were some news about NASA's LCROSS moon impact mission, the Mars Spirit rover, and a detailed account of the ongoing Sloan Digital Sky Survey, now in its 16<sup>th</sup> year and its third phase.

"Bird" Taylor gave some information about Yuri's Night, scheduled for Saturday, April 10 at the Virginia Air and Space Center in Hampton. Persons coordinating in advance with him to bring telescopes will get in free, and thus avoid the \$10 admission fee.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:35 PM.