

Minutes of the University Lowbrow Astronomers for the Year 2006

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Note: It is possible that additional minutes were printed in one of the newsletters, look at the month in question and the next few months. Minutes are most likely to be found the month after. So the December 2004 minutes would most likely be in the January 2005 newsletter, but could be in the December 2004 or February 2005 newsletters.

Partial Minutes of the March 17 Meeting of the University Lowbrow Astronomers

No formal minutes were taken at this meeting, but the following partial minutes were reconstructed after the fact by Dave Snyder using an E-Mail from Kathy Hillig.

1. Nathan Murphy gave a talk “A Survey of Telescope Designs, Part 3” or “How to Tell a Dall-Kirkham from a Ritchey-Chretien.”
2. John Causland and Mark Deprest gave a brief show and tell. John presented a device (basically a sheet of plastic that is illuminated with red LEDs) that is useful for viewing star charts at night. Mark told the group that he bought an eye-piece case at Harbor Freight Tools (located near Ellsworth and Hewitt). There were a number of cases still at the store the last time Mark checked.
3. Doug Scobel gave a talk “A Demo of the Ugliest, Most Useful Computer Program a Deep Sky Observer Could Ask For.” This was a program that Doug developed himself. There was a discussion of how Doug might make the program available, after some thought, Doug decided that interested parties could e-mail him, but he would not distribute the program on the web site as had been discussed at the meeting.
4. Charlie wrote down the list of nominees for the officer positions. They are as follows
 - o Pres - Charlie N.
 - o VPs - Jim F., Bobby G. Kurt H., Nathan M.
 - o OD - D.C. M.
 - o Webmaster - Dave S.
 - o Newsletter - Mark Deprest
 - o Treasurer - Kathy Hillig
5. There was a proposal for changing the dues structure. After some discussion, the following was approved: Regular membership is still \$20 with access to e-newsletter via our member only website. Students and seniors are still \$12 with e-newsletter access. If you live out of state (or in the U.P.) you can join for \$5. Any member who wants a hard copy newsletter sent to you will have to pay \$12 additional to cover printing/postage costs. The change in dues structure takes effect whenever your dues are next renewed.
6. Because the meeting was on Saint Patrick’s Day, we decided to adjourn to Cottage Inn, instead of the usual location, the Brown Jug. (The Brown Jug probably would be filled with undergraduates celebrating the holiday).

Minutes for the General Club Meeting of the University Lowbrow Astronomers (April 21, 2006).

Submitted by Dave Snyder (with a few modifications from Kathy Hillig)

1. Charlie called the meeting to order. It was time for elections. Charlie had written the nominees on the chalk board. There were as follows.

President: Charlie Nielsen

Vice Presidents: Jim Forrester, Bobby Gruszczynski, Kurt Hillig, Nate Murphy

Treasurer: Kathy Hillig

Newsletter Editor: Mark Deprest

Observatory Director: D. C. Moons

Observatory Director Emeritus: Percival Lowell

Webmaster: Dave Snyder

Mark Deprest pointed out that nominees for Observatory Directory Emeritus need to be dead. Since Percival has been dead for some time, this requirement has been met. Kurt Hillig made a motion to accept all nominees. The membership voted unanimously in favor.

2. Paul Walkowski was a Vice President but his term had expired and did not run for the position this time. While he was a Vice President he was our representative to GLAAC. GLAAC is an organization composed of nine amateur astronomy clubs, all located in Southeast Michigan (including the Lowbrows). GLAAC has for the past nine years organized the annual "Astronomy at the Beach" at Kensington Metropark. Charlie suggested that the club appoint Paul as the GLAAC representative (so he could continue in this role). The membership voted unanimously in favor.
3. The July meeting is at the same time as Art Fair. Typically the July meeting is the "Goodies Show" run by John Kirchoff of Rider's Hobby Shop. John will be doing the Goodies Show in August and also will be giving a talk on web cams in June. So the question is what do we do about the July meeting? It would be a very good idea to hold it outside of Ann Arbor, as getting in and out of Ann Arbor is difficult during Art Fair. Norb Vance suggested that we could hold the meeting at Sherzer Observatory (which is located on the campus of Eastern Michigan University). Joe Bernstein (a graduate student in Astronomy) has given two talks before, and had asked if the Lowbrows wanted him to give another talk. Therefore the tentative agenda for the July is: Joe Bernstein will give a talk (subject to be determined) at Sherzer Observatory (we need to verify if this is Ok with Joe).
4. Paul Walkowski told the club that the 10th Annual "Astronomy at the Beach" will be held September 29&30. There also will be another event on June 2&3 for club members and newbies. Each year GLAAC asks clubs to contribute funds to cover expenses for the event. The big expense involves the event speakers (for example if we ask NASA to send an astronaut or a scientist to give a talk, we need to pay plane fare, hotel room for two nights, and meals). The amount needed has varied from year to year. Typically the big clubs (which include the

Lowbrows and the Ford Club) contribute more. This year there are three corporate sponsors (Rider's Hobby Shop, the Cranbrook Institute of Science and the Detroit Science Center). We are being asked to contribute \$250. All expenditures over \$100 must be voted on by the club.

D. C. Moons had some questions regarding funding and potential return on investment. There was discussion.

Kathy said the treasury has \$3800, and we will get additional funds once the tee-shirts are sold. She said that we hadn't spend much on the observatory this year and now that fewer printed newsletters are mailed out, we don't spend as much on that either.

Paul W said that the event would not take place without support from the Lowbrows.

D. C. then said he was in favor and it was brought to a vote. The membership voted unanimously in favor.

5. Mark Deprest told the club about Cartes du Ciel Sky Charts. This is free astronomy software which can be obtained at <http://www.stargazing.net/astropc/index.html>.

Mark talked about the comet 73P/Schwassmann-Wachmann. It has broken into 20 pieces and will pass over the Ring Nebula on May 8. It is now 8.5-8.8 magnitude and will be 5.5 magnitude at its brightest.

There will be a group of cub scouts at the next open house (on April 29th).

Mark will be giving a talk for the Ford Club at Henry Ford Community College on Thursday.

Mark needs articles for the newsletter.

The May newsletter might be ready this coming weekend (if not it will ready soon afterward).

Mark will be giving two talks at the Black Forest Star Party (in August). One is a Beginners Talk and the other a Workshop for Beginners.

6. D. C. Moons was planning to have a work party at the observatory in the near future. He will send out an e-mail asking for volunteers to help out.
7. Dave Snyder said that the password for the web site will be changing. There is a new password and currently both the old and new password are accepted. He will distribute the new password when Mark finishes the May newsletter.
8. Norb Vance tried out the planetarium that Yasu demonstrated at a meeting earlier this year. He said it was quite impressive for \$250. He was able to cope with the fact that the instructions were in Japanese. Mark Deprest suggested that Yumi might help in translating. He liked the meteor feature (the planetarium can display meteors as well as stars).

9. Kathy Hillig had already mentioned that the treasury had \$3800. She added that there are 99 members.
10. Harry Juday said he had brought in a copy of The Herald-Bobroff Astro Atlas. It is pricey (about \$80).
11. The rest of the meeting was devoted to the swap meet (it has been traditional to use the April meeting for Elections and Swap Meet). Various members brought used astronomy equipment, books and magazines to sell or give away.

Meeting date: 19 May 2006

Present: C. Nielsen (Pres.) B. Gruszyznski (Vice Pres.)
J. Forrester (Vice Pres.) K. Hillig (Treas.)
D. Snyder (Web) DC Moons (OD)
M. Deprest (News) N. Murphy (Vice Pres.)

Minutes taken by: Murphy (Vice Pres.)

Called to order: 6:40 pm, 130 Denison Hall

- Topic: **Speakers for 2006 meetings**
- June: John Kirchoff, Webcamming
 - July: Joe Bernstein, Neutron stars
 - August: John Kirchoff, Toy show (at Peach)
 - September – December: open
 - Murphy will pursue Jan Seyfried to present a topic of his choice, or how he started University Optics
 - Gruszczynski will pursue Ken Bertin
- Topic: **Lake Hudson Information Kiosk**
- Key(s) were given to Doug Scobel
 - Doug will post our flyer – we have space for 2 8½x11 sheets
- Topic: **Open houses dates**
- May 20 27 June 17 24
 - July 22 29 August 19
 - September 16 23 October 21 28
 - November 18 25 December 16
- Topic: **Beginner Nights**
- First beginner night will be held along with the open house on August 19
 - Beginners will be separate from the other open house activities (up by the dish)
 - Volunteers for beginner instructions will be found via e-mail request
- Topic: **Advertising in the Ann Arbor papers**
- Will continue as before, using the available free space, per Bernard's suggestion
- Topic: **Astronomy Day Activity for next year**
- YES, we will participate
 - Committee for organizing our activity: Mark Deprest, Otto Cardew, John Torok
 - Additional help will be found via e-mail when needed
 - Mark has the handbook

Topic: **ATM Group**

- Murphy is reviving the ATM group to renovate the Coulter 17"
- Email list is started, maintained by Snyder (lowbrow-ATM@umich.edu)
- First meeting is 19 May, immediately following club meeting

Topic: **T-shirts**

- All T-shirts have been sold, remaining 9 or 10 will be reserved as speaker gifts
- More can be ordered as demand warrants – will need 30 or so pre-ordered shirts to make an order of 50 shirts (no additional fees)

Topic: **E-mail list abuse**

- Officers and members warned not to abuse the lowbrow-members@umich.edu list, and not to use the lowbrow.astronomers@umich.edu address, as that goes out to absolutely everyone – members and non-members.
- Keep e-mails pertinent to membership at large - private or group "conversations" should be limited to the group of interest
- Dave Snyder can create new mailing list as necessary

Topic: **Treasurer's report**

- Membership: 100 members (4 have dues outstanding)
- Treasury balance: \$5018
- Additional money: \$463 owed for T-shirt sales

Topic: **Web Master's report**

- Web site has been updated with lots of new articles and photos
- New password: pay your dues to find out!

Topic: **Newsletter editor's report**

- New lowbrow banner printed, very impressive
- Mark needs articles, as usual

Topic: **Monthly Meeting**

- Clayton Kessler made an impressive presentation on astrophotography, both with film and CCD cameras of all types.

Notes for July 18, 2006 Meeting

Proposal for the ATM group to spend up to \$1200 on a project to rebuild the club's Coulter telescope. The proposal passed.

The document for the Coulter Rebuild follows:

PROPOSAL

TO THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE

UNIVERSITY LOWBROW ASTRONOMERS

DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION OF A TELESCOPE USING THE 17.5" MIRROR FROM THE COULTER ODYSSEY

BY THE

LOWBROW ATM GROUP

I. Introduction

A group of active Lowbrows were interested in re-building the 17.5" Coulter Odyssey that is currently stored at the Observatory on Peach Mountain. Several vocal and enthusiastic volunteers have since joined the original group and expressed an interesting in helping with the rebuild.

Nathan Murphy volunteered to (re-) form an ATM group specifically to handle this task.

Active Members of Lowbrow-ATM to date:

Nathan Murphy (VP, ATM chair)

Mark Deprest (Newsletter Editor, ATM Secretary)

Mike Kurylo

Jack Brisbin

Doug Nelle

Doug Scobel

Jim Forrester (VP)

Don Fohey

Ken Cook

Yasuharu Inugi

Yumi Inugi

Russ Vente

Paul Walkowski

As can be seen in the above list, the members involved are the most active observers and ATMs in the club, and some of the officers.

The impetus for this project is a strong commitment from a few core members in the ATM group to design a new scope for the Coulter mirror. A scope of that size would provide excellent views for interested club members and the public. It complements the McMath and large member scopes such as Causland's 61cm Starmaster, Doug Nelle and Chris Sarnecki's 18" dobs among others.

There has been a recent influx of new members that have recently bought scopes without the knowledge that there are scopes that belong to the club, for member use, readily available. Access to an 18" dob would provide both new and established members access to a very large scope, without the time and expense of keeping one at their house, and transporting it to peach mountain once a month.

Other benefits to building a new scope with the Coulter mirror:

- A two-piece, truss-dob design (see below) allows the scope to be portable, if needed
- It will encourage members new to astronomy (young and old) to graduate from observing simple bright objects in small scopes to observe dimmer, fainter, more challenging objects
- It will enrich our membership
- It will provide a flagship scope that can be brought to club sponsored events away from Peach Mountain such as Astronomy at the Beach, our various

elementary and middle school functions, and even long-distance star parties such as GLSG and BFSP

- It will provide an opportunity for the interested members to learn telescope construction and design

II. Concept

The first meeting of the Lowbrow-ATM group was at the May 2006 meeting. There, it was established that the group, for the time being, will concentrate solely on the 17.5" rebuild, and not entertain other, parallel projects at this time.

The group also decided to design and build a dobsonian telescope using the primary from the Coulter. The design will be along the lines of an Obsession or Starmaster design, with a square mirror box, 18-point floatation cell for the mirror and circular upper tube with truss-tube supports. Below is a photo of a Starmaster telescope. Our proposal would follow this design.



1. Courtesy Starmaster Telescopes

II. Tasks

- Detailed design of the mirror box, ground board, truss system
- Detailed design of the secondary spider and primary mirror cell
- Design of the ground board and altitude bearings
- Disassembly of the Coulter Odyssey
- Cleaning and storage of primary during construction
- Acquisition of material
- Fabrication
- Assembly
- Testing and adjustment

There are enough tools and expertise within the Lowbrow-ATM group to complete this project.

John Torok has volunteered the use of his woodshop.

Mike Kurylo will be handling CAD modeling and drafting.

Mike Kurylo has a source for machining if necessary

The primary will be stored in a suitable place determined by the ATM group, not at the observatory

Different parts of the scope may be worked on at different locations as suitable.

The ATM group should take responsibility for fabrication and assembly.

III. Budget

Below is a breakdown of costs for the different components involved in the construction of the scope. They are reasonable estimates. The budget should be considered an upper limit that shall not be exceeded by the ATM group without prior approval from the Membership. All reasonable efforts will be made to stay well within the budget. The purpose of this exercise is to build a scope the ULA are proud of, not to build the minimum structure that will hold the primary and form a star image. The prices listed are for new components. Savings can be realized through building some of the components and buying on the used market.

Structure

| | |
|------------------------|---------------------|
| Teflon bearing blocks: | \$25 |
| Ebony star laminate: | donated |
| Aluminum truss tubes: | \$110 |
| Truss connectors: | \$200 |
| Kydex for baffling: | \$25 |
| Truss Shroud: | \$15 |
| Fasteners: | \$25 |
| Wood: | \$50 (much donated) |

Primary mirror cell

| | |
|-----------------------------|------------------|
| Steel and aluminum: | \$100 |
| Bearings, bolts, fasteners: | \$25 |
| Sling material: | \$15 |
| Cooling fans and batteries: | \$100 |
| Primary mirror: | Lowbrow property |

Secondary Mount

Spider, includes:

Mirror holder

Dew heater

Secondary mirror: \$360

Upper tube assembly

Focuser: donated

Finder scope: Lowbrow Property

Telrad: Lowbrow Property

Dew heaters: \$50

Dew heater control \$100

Estimate Summary

| | |
|-----------------|--------|
| STRUCTURE | \$450 |
| MIRROR CELL | \$240 |
| SECONDARY MOUNT | \$360 |
| UPPER TUBE | \$150 |
| | |
| TOTAL COST | \$1200 |

IV. Conclusion

With a requested budget of \$1200, the Lowbrow-ATM group can design and build a high quality dobsonian telescope that will serve as a flagship scope along with the McMath 24. The money requested neither strains the treasury, nor threatens any other projects. The Lowbrow-ATM group will learn how to design and build a quality telescope, and enrich both the general membership and the public. This is a project worthy of our club.

Lowbrow Astronomers—Meeting Minutes

September 15, 2006

Don Fohey gave an extremely informative talk on the construction of his home made digital setting circles. His out of pocket costs were about \$250, more or less half the cost of a commercial product.

We also viewed a DVD of John Dobson, the revered sidewalk astronomer. He is one funny guy.

Mark Deprest called for newsletter articles (surprise) and displayed a copy of the Michigan Sky Map. The map is a light pollution study of our state and shows there are some very dark skies not 200 miles north.

Dave Snyder informed us of the death of Patricia Whitesell, the faculty member who refurbished the Detroit Observatory on Central Campus.

Kathy Hillig is taking orders for 2007 calendars and Observer Handbooks. Order at the October meeting or via email by October 31.

A report from DC Moons was read. He reports the replacement of the worm gear on the dec drive of the McMath is moving forward. He has found a shop willing to machine the part for about half the previous estimates of \$1800-\$2000. DC hopes to replace the gear this winter when the Observatory is unlikely to be used.

Respectfully submitted,

Jim Forrester

Lowbrow Astronomers-Officers Meeting Minutes

November 17, 2006

Officers Present: Kurt Hillig, Kathy Hillig, Dave Snyder, Mark Deprest, Jim Forrester, Charles Nielsen.

Absent: D.C. Moons, Bobby "G", Nathan Murphy.

- 1) President Nielsen and Webmaster Snyder examined the club financial journal and recent bank statements, and found nothing out of date, order, or of suspicious nature. The alleged and legendary "Aruba Slush Fund" did not make an appearance. We declared this the annual audit.
- 2) The minutes of the May 19, 2006 Officers Meeting, and the September 15 General Meeting were approved unanimously.
- 3) VP Forrester will pursue Tom Ryan as our December speaker. Some leads given for future speakers by President Nielsen, and Webmaster Snyder were: Fred Adams, Perry Sampson, John Dobson, Rudi Lindner, Andy Tomash, Ken Bertin, Jan Seyfried, and we may have forgotten a couple, like Norb Vance for example. We have nothing booked beyond December of this year.
- 4) Newsletter Editor Deprest announced that Mike Kurylo has taken over as the Project Coordinator for the Coulter Project. Deprest expects the group to start work after the first of the year.
- 5) Open discussion about allocated expenditures of the club, and possible future purchases. It was decided without opposition to have Deprest purchase a spare bulb for his projector since the majority of its use is for club business, and to make the purchase now so that the bulb is available instantly when needed. Deprest suggested using some funds to join the Astronomical League. He said he will bring up the subject at a future general meeting and we may decide at that time. There was also discussion of some McMath enhancements, and out of the discussion it was decided to have Nielsen contact the Observatory Committee to see if there would be interest in them making a proposal to the club for a focal reducer for the main scope, and/or some type of camera for the 6 inch refractor.

Respectfully submitted,
Charles Nielsen 11-19-2006