

Minutes of the University Lowbrow Astronomers for the Year 2014

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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 2014 minutes would most likely be in the January 2015 newsletter, but could be in the December 2014 or February 2015 newsletters.

University Lowbrow Astronomers
Meeting Minutes/Officer Reports
Friday February 21, 2014

9:49 pm Charlie Nielsen, President; informed the group that we have been contacted by Leslie Science Center about another observing session similar to the ones we have done in the past. Brighton State Park has contacted us for another observing session. Charlie expressed his concern about the events, not interfering with the Peach Mountain Open houses. Charlie awarded the Night Sky Network pin to three members; Dave Jorgensen, Jim Forrester, Jack Brisbin.

9:56 pm Dave Snyder, V.P: Proposed to replace the club logo with the logo that Merry Celeste Donovan designed. There is a major issue with the design because the logo features a University of Michigan "M" trademark in the design. After a discussion there was a call for the vote on the (1) logo with the U of M Logo "M" or (2) **without the U of M logo.**

At 10:05 a show of hands was called for the vote. The club approved the (2) logo **with out** the U of M trademark "M". Dave Snyder and Jack Brisbin meet with the Student Astronomical Society (U of M) and discussed collaborating on events with the SAS at a future date. The SAS president will be included in the clubs member e-mail list.

Jim Forrester, Officer, Newsletter Editor; Articles for the newsletter are starting to disappear; **Send Articles.** If the club wants a newsletter, then we have to write articles.

Doug Scobel, Officer, Treasurer: Club has 117 memberships and \$5300 in the bank. The new parts for the telescope have arrived. The upper cage assembly has been glued, the focuser in travel issue was discussed, we will go with cutting the truss tubes after we do another focuser in travel test.

Jack Brisbin V.P.: Discussed the 11 annual Astronomy Show and Swap Meet hosted by the Ford astronomy club on March 15 2014. Jack agreed to send a pdf of the notice to the club membership. Jim Forrester will also publish it in the newsletter. Updates to the youngastronomer.org web site where completed.

Mike Radwick, Officer, Observatory Director; Because of the snow, no one has been out to the observatory. The main road to Peach Mountain has been cleared but the dirt road to the observatory has not been cleared. Next open house is March 22, 2014

John Causland, member; Discussed the Any Clear Night Observers (ACNO) and asked members to get on the E-mail list if they are interested. They have been using Causland's driveway as an observing site.

10:21 pm, Motion to Adjourn was made, seconded, show of hands agreed.

Meeting minutes written by Jack Brisbin V.P. February 24, 2014

University Lowbrow Astronomers
Meeting Minutes/Officer Reports
March 21, 2014
6:30 pm to 7:30 pm

Charlie Nielsen, President; Contacted by Brighton Recreation Area about possible dates for stargazing event in May 23 or August 16. Also working with Leslie Science Center on possible Stargazing events. Discussion on helping the U of M Student Astronomical Society with their open house on March 28. Charlie referenced a May 17 recycle date that would coincide with the Observatory clean-up discussion.

The April elections for club officers were discussed with officers present. There could be 2 to 3 V.P. stepping down, that will create opportunities for new officers. Mike Radwick notified Charlie that we would not run for Observatory Director, that position is open.

Charlie and Dave Snyder were contacted by a reporter from the Chelsea Standard about any astronomy events of note coming up, like the upcoming Lunar Eclipse. He asked about and became very interested in light pollution and asked if he could ask us more about that subject for future newspaper articles.

Dave Snyder Vice President; Web site updated with new logo and the club flyer was update. Dave brought copies of the new flyer and passed it around. Dave stated he would be at the March 28, SAS open house and bring a Night sky Network demonstration kit. He is also working with Krishna Rao on the web page update.

Jack Brisbin, Vice President; Discussed the 17.5 mirror coating being done by Spectrum Coatings in Florida. The 98% coating would cost \$310 and \$10 extra for a center spot. For insurance purposes, a replacement value of \$4000 (mirror coated) was agreed upon. Jack Stated he will send out the mirror March 24 or 25. The discussion continued with other officers about the build status of the club 17.5 dobsonian.

Jim Forrester, Newsletter Editor; Articles for the newsletter are getting low again
“**SEND ARTICLES**” one of Jims most important requests. Jim brought up a discussion about changes to the Observatory that will be needed to accommodate the new 17.5 Dobsonian telescope. The discussion involved other officers and led to an clean-up and re-organization of the Observatories contents. This year's severe weather conditions (snowmagedon) added to the observatory conditions that led to the decision to cancel the March 22 Open house. Cancellation notice was e-mailed March 20th. Jim brought up the March 29th Library loaner scope repair/maintenance date that is conducted by club members. Jim stated there would be another trip to the Observatory during the upcoming week to determine the March 29 open house status.

Jim mentioned that we had no open house coordinators beyond the May 3rd date. Charlie Nielsen promptly volunteered for June. The end of May dates and the July-November dates saw no takers until Kurt Hillig agreed to take Sept 20. Jim also stated if no one volunteered for the open dates he would cancel the open house as they approached.

Doug Scobel, Treasurer; Doug stated we have 119 memberships(family). He continued his discussion about re-ordering t-shirts, sweat shirts with or without hoods. Logos and who printed the last order.

Some club members attended the officers meeting and expressed their interest in the Observatory, 17.5 telescope build and the upcoming elections.

Meeting Minutes submitted by Jack Brisbin, Vice President, March 28, 2014

Minutes for the General Club Meeting on Friday July 18, 2014.

The meeting was held at the Eastern Michigan University Planetarium.

1. Before the meeting there was pizza, soft drinks and cookies.
2. The meeting was called to order by President Charlie Nielsen.

There was a proposal to increase dues submitted by Doug Scobel (it can be found in the June newsletter). There was some brief discussion. President Charlie Nielsen asked if there were any objections to the proposal.

One unresolved issue: The club could become a member of the Astronomical League. One option would cost \$5 per member, each member of the Lowbrows would automatically become a member of the Astronomical League. Another option some Lowbrows could be a member of the League and some not. This would cost \$7.50 for each Lowbrow that wanted to become a member of the League. Either way it would be less expensive than the normal cost of \$30 per person to join the League.

There was no objection to raising the dues. Charlie wanted to wait until August to have a final vote, so the issue will be brought up at the August meeting. We will probably vote on the proposal then.

3. Social Media

There had been discussions between President Charlie Nielsen and Vice President Dave Snyder about the club entering into Social Media. Up to this point the club has avoided Social Media. This led to some discussions among the officers. There was agreement that this would be a good idea and might help the club connect with a wider group of people.

There was a motion for the club to set up a Facebook page. The motion passed.

4. Newsletter Editor Jim Forrester

Jim needs articles. Previously he suggested that photographs of "a dog next to a telescope" would be an easy way to submit something to the newsletter. He suggested this again.

5. Vice President Ken Ruble

Ken had arranged the August Meeting. Kevin Iott (design engineer from PlaneWave Instruments) will be talking to the club in August.

6. Vice President Dave Snyder

Both Dave and Webmaster Krishna Rao (who was not present at the meeting) will be working on a Facebook page.

7. Vice President Don Foey

Don mentioned that there is an open house scheduled for the next day (July 19th).

8. Treasurer Doug Scobel

Doug reported that there are 120 members and a little over \$4000 in the bank account.

We probably should order new T-shirts. Last time we ordered from Sunshine and it cost \$1200.

9. Observatory Director Jack Brisbin

The 4.5 inch refractor was returned to the observatory in a box.

The Wheel Locks (part of the mechanism that allows the roll off roof to work) were adjusted.

There is an outlet in the observatory that was not working. This is under investigation.

Jack was planning on "reorganizing the tree population" near the McMath building.

10. Norb Vance (Director of Sherzer Observatory)

The main part of the meeting commenced. Norb started with a slide show. There were pictures of Sherzer Observatory, Great Lakes Stargaze, David Levy among other things.

Within the last week, two members of the Southeast Michigan Astronomy Community had passed away: John Schroer (member of the Ford Amateur Astronomy Club and the Warren Astronomical Society), and Bob Fitzgerald (member of the Ford Amateur Astronomy Club). Norb showed photos of both John and Bob and asked for a moment of silence.

Next Norb showed a video entitled "Saturn: Jewel of the Heavens" produced by Clark Planetarium in Salt Lake City.

Then there was a demo of the Planetarium. Norb showed how he could control the planetarium from an iPad.

11. Sherzer Observatory.

After the planetarium, we went to the Scherzer Observatory (also on the EMU campus, a short walk from the planetarium).

Club members went to the roof, and Norb showed us the new street lighting around the observatory. Except for the nearby Domino's Pizza (which had the same annoying lighting it had before), the view was darker than it used to be.

The clouds thinned enough to look at Saturn through the new 16-inch Orion Dob and the 10-inch AstroPhysics in the dome. Excellent views. Thanks again for hosting, Norb!

Submitted by Vice President Dave Snyder

University Lowbrow Astronomers
August 14, 2014
Meeting Minutes

The meeting began at 7:30pm in room 807 of the Dennison Building.

Our speaker was Kevin lott, the design engineer for Planewave Instruments. He presented the design of Planewave's new 1 meter telescope. He explained the Corrected Dall-Kirkham optical design, and the direct drive motor system of the altitude, azimuth drive system. The telescope will have a Nasmyth Focus along the altitude axis which provides for the same eyepiece height regardless of telescope position with virtually no balancing issue as you change out equipment. He presented the data analysis of the 1 meter mirror cavity design from the finite element design tool. He also presented pictures of many of their telescope installation around the world. The first 1 meter assembly will be completed in about 3 weeks. He extended an invitation for Lowbrows to visit their facility in Deerfield Michigan and see the manufacture and final assembly of the telescope.

The Business meeting :

Doug Scobel made a motion to increase club dues for one year membership:

- Family dues from \$20.00 to \$30.00.
- Senior (age 55 and older) and student dues from \$12.00 to \$20.00.
- Out-of-state residents or residents of Michigan's Upper Peninsula dues to remain at \$5.00.
- Extra to have a printed version of the newsletter mailed to you to remains at \$18.00.
- The increases would go into effect immediately.

Kurt Hillig seconded the motion. Jim Forrester asked if there was any discussion, there was none. (This has been discussed at previous meetings). The motion passed by a show of hands. It appeared that everyone present raised their hands to pass the motion.

Officer's Reports:

Charlie Nielsen:

Reported that the weather for the Brighton Recreation Area Meteor and Smores event on Saturday did not look promising. He would make the final determination sometime Saturday. He also reported that our next meeting will be in Room G115 Angell Hall. There is a door to the left of the main entrance to Tisch Hall which enters Angell Hall right in front of our room. Our room is in the extreme southwest corner of Angell Hall. Tisch Hall 's entrance is on the south side of what appears to be Angell Hall. It is all one building. Detailed information will be sent out via email.

Ken Ruble: Nothing to report

Don Fohey: Nothing to report

Doug Scobel (Treasurer):

T-Shirt and Sweatshirt orders are to be placed soon. Pricing has been provided in email message. T-Shirts will be order in a 100 quantity of various sizes. Sweatshirts and hoodies will be order on request and money for them must be paid by the next meeting.

The Astronomy Magazine discount subscriptions are being finalized and all orders must be made by the end of the meeting.

We have 119 members and about \$4K in the treasury.

He has not been able to contact Brian Close and would like members to notify him if they have a way to contact him.

In planning for the next order for RASC handbooks and calendars, he notes how expensive the RASC calendars have become and asked if members may prefer the less expensive Astronomy Magazine Calendars. Jim Forrester explained the he preferred to support a non-profit such as RASC over a for-profit publishing company. Doug suggested that this club discuss this further at another time.

Krishna Rao:

Reported that a Facebook page is under development. A private page has been created with updates from the lowbrow Google calendar and Lowbrow blog. He is working to better integrate Lowbrow pictures. Testing and development will continue. He stressed that the success of the page will depend on members with Facebook accounts sharing the page with all their Facebook friends in order for it to be successful in disseminating Lowbrow awareness.

Jack Brisbin:

Tree re-allocation has continued near the observatory.

He has worked and patched some of the observatory cracks in the walls.

There is no lock on the gate. Charlie Nielsen added that the School of Natural Resources will have a meeting later this month which will decide in a very general sense who should have keys and accesses to various U of M properties. We don't expect to be granted keys until after that meeting.

Jim Forrester reported that he needs newsletter articles.

Paul Walkowski:

Astronomy at the beach will be September 26th and 27th. The speakers this year will be the Director of the Abrahams Planetarium and the Director of the Michigan Dark Skies Preserver.

The GLAAC organization which puts on "Astronomy at the Beach" is in need of board members. Due to death and members resigning for health reasons they are down to 6 members and he ask anyone interested to join the board. They meet 10 times per year approximately monthly on Sunday afternoons from 1 to 2:30pm to plan each year's event.

On hearing of the "Astronomy at the Beach" event Kevin lott of Planewave Instruments offered that he would try and provide one of their telescopes for the event.

Kurt Hillig reported that a colleague of his would like to donate his 4 1/2 inch equatorial mounted telescope to the club's Peach Mt. Observatory or other good home.

Meeting adjourned at 9:40pm

University Lowbrow Astronomers (ULA)
Members Meeting
November 21, 2014

ULA member Brian Ottum gave a well received presentation on the remote control of the observatory he and his friend Dr. Stan Watson constructed at a location near the SW corner of New Mexico (NM). We observed the site from cameras both inside and outside the observatory. He used computer software to power on devices and watched via the cameras as the roof rolled off the observatory. We could see the telescope slew as he pointed it at Vega and then were able to see the image from the camera attached to the telescope. Clouds in NM hampered the view. Stan and Brian's tales and pictures of developing the site, installing the mounts and telescopes was followed by an enjoyable discussion period. We hope to have Brian back at another meeting for a view thru the telescope when it is not cloudy in New Mexico.

BUSINESS MEETING

Charlie Nielsen has a confirmation that Brother Guy Consolmagno, the Vatican Astronomy, will be our speaker for November 2015. The exact date, time and location will be worked out. Norbert Vance of EMU has offered facilities for the meeting which can accommodate the large number of people expected to attend the presentation.

Dave Snyder reported that the International Astronomical Union (IAU) is expanding its public outreach program. Part of the program is to have members propose names for newly discovered exo-planets. Charlie Nielsen made a motion that ULA should join the IAU. Kurt Hillig seconded the motion and a show of hands approved it.

Jim Forrester reported that newsletter articles are needed. He has nothing for the next newsletter. Jim also explained the U of M Transplant Center Charity Event. The "Evening at Peach Mt with the ULA" for 12 guests had a winning bid of \$2000. ULA will host the event on a date to be determined this spring. We will pick 3 dates, if the weather is bad, we will then pick another 3 dates until the event is held. ULA volunteers will be needed to host, set up tents, tables, serve food and operate the McMath telescope. Jim and Ginia will prepare the food.

Jim commented that the ULA provides significant astronomy public education which he personally feels is very important. He feels that the ULA membership is generally interested on many aspects of science. He regrets the "destruction of federal funding for the sciences at all levels". He pointed out that National Public Radio will no longer have reporters dedicated to global warming or environmental issues. He feels that it would be appropriate for the ULA to include environment issues in its public education role and would hope he could include such an article in the ULA newsletter.

Charlie Nielsen reported that the Leslie Science Center event on Nov. 7th was well attended and was well received. The center donated a check in the amount of \$50 to the ULA.

Krishna Roa reported that anyone can post pictures, text, or links to the Lowbrow facebook page. It is a moderated page, so it will not appear until he or Dave Snyder approve it.

Don Fohey reported that the open house for Saturday Nov. 22nd was cancelled because of the cloudy and rainy weather forecast.

Norbert Vance reported that EMU received a new Orion 12 inch telescope. It assemble easily and works very well.

Jack Brisbin reported that a ramp is required to transport the club 17" telescope. He recommended an eight foot foldable ramp. He made a motion that the club authorize \$350 to purchase a ramp similar to the personal ramp that he has experience with.

Discussion followed: Doug Scobel proposed that the ATM group look at building a ramp. Much discussion insued as to the features of many styles and designs. It was suggested that a used one may be available for sale on the internet. Dave Jorgensen volunteered to research various designs that could be fabricated. A motion was made, supported and passed to have Dave J. research designs to build a ramp and report back to the club at the December meeting.

Doug Scobel reported that the club has about 120 members and approximately \$4000 in the treasury.

Meeting Adjourned at 9:55pm

University Lowbrow Astronomers

Club meeting minutes – December 19, 2014

President Charlie Nielsen gaveled the meeting to order. Our scheduled speaker, James Cutler, was unable to make his presentation due to the flu.

Dr. John Monnier, Associate Professor of Astronomy at U-M, and associated with the “Hands on Museum” was introduced to the club by V.P. Dave Snyder. John went through the steps, as he knew, regarding rules and process for naming exo-planets by the IAU (International Astronomical Union). Several members offered suggestions about a name we might submit and if it might be coordinated with “Hands on Museum”.

Charlie Nielsen introduced Tom Ryan who spoke about the work he has done regarding multiple coordinated laser beams (1064 nm wavelength) for military application against incoming missiles. The project involves adjusting the individual beams using fast (5KHz) piezo electric actuators to concentrate/coordinate the individual beams (about 35mm diameter) that would otherwise be misaligned due to atmospheric turbulence. 32,000 watts are now achievable in a small area at a distance of 5 km, sufficient to quickly melt heavy gauge aluminum sheeting. The talk was well received, with many audience questions and comments fielded excellently by Tom.

Charlie Nielsen mentioned that the Leslie Science Center potentially would like to schedule an activity on August 13 at Peach Mountain.

Newsletter Editor, Jim Forrester, presented a proposed open house schedule for 2015. Jim said the schedule would be emailed to members for their comments. It was suggested that on Astronomy Day, April 25, that the club might want to do a public telescope activity in Ann Arbor. Then Jim made a pitch for articles for the upcoming newsletter, since he has very little material for the next one.

Webmaster, Krishna Rao, reported that the club website size has been increased to accommodate the club’s website needs.

V.P. Ken Ruble: Nothing to report.

Treasurer, Doug Scobel, reported that the membership is at 118 members, a slight decrease from the high point of 120 members and that the treasury is at about \$4000. D.C. Moons suggested that we contact former members for soliciting them as members again.

V.P. Dave Jorgensen reported that the majority of email notes regarding a loading ramp for the 17.5 inch scope seemed to indicate that a purchased, ready-made aluminum ramp, was preferable to designing and building one from wood. Jack Brisbin has been looking for new and used ramps that vary in cost from about \$200 to \$350. No final decision made. Dave J. also reminded the club that in January, Dr. Claude Pruneau, from WSU, will be talking about his research in Switzerland at the CERN LHC and how it relates to our understanding of the “Big Bang”.

V.P. Dave Snyder reported that he had submitted an application to the IAU so the Lowbrows would become a "society of amateur astronomers".

Observatory Director, Jack Brisbin, did a slide/video presentation of the latest activity at the observatory. He said that retracting of the roof all the way to the rail stops likely would damage the rail/roof weather stripping he recently installed. Some discussion of methods to prevent this damage ensued. Jack installed 2 dehumidifiers, tying them into the humidistat controller set to 60% humidity. He covered the 24" McMath mirror area with a large plastic bag to reduce the problem of roof drips on the scope. He also discussed adding a heated blanket on the 24" to prevent dew accumulation. Jack showed us pictures of the work he has done to increase our view of the horizon by cutting down many of the trees close to the observatory. He will continue to monitor the conditions inside the observatory with his data logger. It seems to tell us when "wet" conditions occur.

Jim Forrester reported that he and V.P. Don Fohey visited the Northfield library at their request to help them with their telescope program. After evaluating the scopes, they decided to wait until spring to decide what and if improvements could be made.

A motion was made to close the meeting and Charlie gaveled it closed.

David Jorgensen