

KAA MONTHLY MEETING

Minutes

February 14, 2020

Location: KSC

Time: 7:00pm - 7:45pm

Present: Jim and Phinie Faux, Carol Littleton, David Hayward, Edward Lotkowski and Jeanne Applegate, Phil Hitchcock, Mike Paulin, Gabe Klueh

Secretary's Report: Accepted as submitted.

Treasurer's Report: Club balance: February \$1,864.85 - January \$1,799.85.

Upcoming Events:

- Stay tuned for possible on-the-fly future club observing sessions. Notifications with details will be by email from Bob, Carol or Gabe.
- Observing scheduled at Otter Brook Dam for February 15th at 7:00pm - *cancelled*.
- Our next club meeting is scheduled for March 13th at 7pm at the Keene State College Young Student Center.
- Our March observing is scheduled for Saturday the 14th at 7pm at the Sullivan Observatory or Otter Brook Dam, weather dependent.
- Dublin's Perkin Observatory every Sunday night - 1 hour after sunset until 10pm open public observing with Erik Schmitt.

Old Business:

- Observatory Work:
 - At this time Vinyl siding work is on hold.
- Please email Bob, Carol or Gabe if you have a presentation you would like to do or have a topic you would like us to present on the night sky, telescopes and etc. At this time we have no topic for the next meeting so we're open to suggestions.

New Business:

- KAA 2020 Membership list finalized and attached.
- Julie looking to do some observing with her astronomy class this month or next.
- Stonewall Farm would like to reschedule an observing session sometime in the spring time or summer depending on KAA availability.

- This month's Hot Topics:
 - NASA to turn of Spitzer Space Telescope - 16 years in use, sees in infrared light things like exoplanets, brown dwarf stars, things too cold for much visible light. Discovered TRAPPIST-1 planetary system. The James Webb Space Telescope will be its successor.
 - Betelgeuse dimming continues - Its visible luminosity has "fallen off a cliff" recently - a sign that the star could be on the verge of going supernova. "The most recent measurements put the visual magnitude of Betelgeuse at about +1.66, the dimmest it's been in our 25 years of photometry," says Villanova University. Betelgeuse is a highly evolved red supergiant--the type of star that could collapse and explode at any moment. Indeed, the dimming of Betelgeuse could be explained if the star has suddenly contracted to about 92% of its previous radius. But that's not the only possibility. Betelgeuse might be dimmed by a giant starspot--or maybe it is shrouded by an outburst of stardust from its own cool outer layers--or something else entirely. No one knows. Answers might be forthcoming on Feb. 21st. Astronomers have long known that Betelgeuse is a variable star. If Betelgeuse starts to bounce back on Feb. 21st, this whole episode might just be a deeper-than-average pulsation, and perhaps the supernova watch can be called off.
 - ESA's sun-exploring Solar Orbiter launched Monday, February 10 will be the first spacecraft ever to fly over and photograph the sun's poles. It'll study the origin of the solar wind, which has the potential to affect earthly technologies.
 - The 30th anniversary of the Pale Blue Dot image from Voyager 1
- Carol gave a great talk on the February constellation's - Auriga (the Charioteer with brightest star Capella and open star clusters M36, M37 and M38), Gemini (the Twins with brightest stars Castor and Pollux and highlight M35), and Monoceros (the Unicorn with highlight M50).
- We watched a short video on "Whats up for February 2020" - highlighting observing targets of the month. We also watched a short video on "Tonight's Sky: February 2020" from the Hubble Space Telescope YouTube Channel.