

Cape Cod Astronomical Society

Minutes of the August 7, 2014 meeting

Attendance: Total 14 (12 members and 2 guests)

The meeting was held at the Harwich Elementary School, home of the Harwich Observatory.

Founded by CCAS member and Monomoy District technology teacher Larry Brookhart, the observatory's equipment is located in a garage bay at the back of the school. While Larry had been running an astronomy club since 1996, the observatory itself was opened in 2011. There are a wide variety of astronomical teaching aids and equipment, some donated and some obtained through grants written by Larry. Regular observing nights are held during much of the year, open to both Monomoy students and the public.

At the meeting, Larry gave a presentation in which he described the history of the observatory and its equipment, and his approach to educating students and visitors. He then projected a brief NASA space shuttle video, and described how he uses that and other videos to help explain some astronomical concepts to the students in easily understandable illustrations. For example, he discusses the orbital speed of the International Space Station in terms of how much distance it covers in the time it takes to walk around the school (i.e., the ISS would travel roughly the width of the continental United States). Larry also did a demo of the software Stellarium, used to instruct students in the motions of the heavenly bodies.

Some Harwich Observatory facts: donated telescopes include a 32 inch Dobsonian (the largest telescope on Cape Cod), a 6 inch APO refractor, a 10 inch Dobsonian, and a 10 inch Schmidt-Cassegrain. The observatory also has a smaller Dobsonian whose mirror was ground by some of Larry's students. Local vendors donated the cabinets and the floor finish. Future plans call for astro photography, the purchase of a solar telescope, and continued training of interested students who assist during observation sessions.

After Larry's presentation and a question and answer session, the 32 inch, the APO, and the two 10 inch scopes were utilized for an observation session. The sky was clear and we had nice views, including the moon, Saturn, Mars, and doubles Mizar and Alcor.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Gus Romano, CCAS Secretary