



February, 2026

Website: www.midhudsonastro.org

President : Steve Dittmar
Secretary: Jim Rockrohr
Newsletter Editor: Rick Versace
Publicity: Tim Denman
Speakers: Bart Henin

Directors: Alex Passas, Jack Chastain, Steve Dittmar, and Willie Yee

groups.io Group: mhaa.groups.io

Vice President: Mike Goldstein
Treasurer: Eric Myers
Membership Coordinator: Steve Dittmar
Webmaster: Steve Dittmar
Outreach: Michael Goldstein
College Liaison: Dr. Amy Bartholomew

The next meeting is February 17th, 2026, on Zoom and in person. Check MeetUp for details and link. Zoom link will be sent to all those that RSVP.

February Speaker

Theodore van Kessel will be giving a fascinating presentation on "using AI (specifically Surya) to model and predict solar weather titled: **"Surya - A Foundation Model for Heliophysics."** He will be discussing the Surya foundation model for solar forecasting, data preparation, model architecture and downstream tasks including solar flare prediction.

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Online link to the MHAA monthly Business Meeting Agenda:

<http://mhaa.midhudsonastro.org/agenda>

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"Astronomy at Lake Taghkanic State Park"

<http://spy-hill.net/myers/astro/ltsp/>

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## **Minutes of the monthly meeting of the Mid Hudson Astronomical Association, January 20, 2026**

The meeting was called to order at 7:35 PM by President Steve Dittmar in the Coykendall Auditorium at SUNY New Paltz, NY, and on the online application Zoom.

(The minutes of the December meeting were not discussed.)

### **Officer's Reports:**

**President:** Steve Dittmar was present.

- Request for an event at the Monroe Library.

**Vice President:** Mike Goldstein was present.

- Nothing to report.

**Recording Secretary:** Jim Rockrohr was present.

- Nothing to report.

**Publicity:** Tim Denman was present.

- Possible issue with MeetUp. Steve to check into it.

**Newsletter:** Rick Versace was not present.

- (Not discussed).

**Treasurer:** Eric Myers was present.

- See newsletter for the current numbers.
- Annual insurance bill of \$936.00 paid.
  - o Mike Goldstein may have a lead on cheaper insurance through the Astronomical League.
- Per the bylaws, Eric will present a budget for 2026 at the February meeting.
- Gained 1 new paid member this month.

**Speakers:** Bart Henin was present.

- February – Artificial Intelligence use in astronomy
- March – Astrophotography
- April – Student project report
- May – (open)

**Outreach:** Mike Goldstein was present.

- Arranging Star Party at Woodchuck Lodge – See Mike.

**Solar System Ambassador:** Willie Yee was present.

- Willie presented 2025 night Sky Network outreach pins to:
  - Jack Chastain
  - Rick Versace
  - Eric Myers
  - Steve Dittmar
  - Mike Goldstein
  - Bart Henin

**MHAA 2026 Strategic Plan:**

- Initiative by Jack and Mike Goldstein.
  - Grow Club from 100 paid members to 400.
  - Lower club's median age.
  - Encourage women's participation and membership
  - Increase participation in club activities.
  - Finish the 501(c)(3) application.
- Looking for Input from membership
  - Zoom meeting on February 3<sup>rd</sup> to discuss in more detail
- General discussion:
  - Greeters at events and meetings to make people welcome and get sign ups.
  - Improve the value proposition:
    - Members only seminars
    - Affiliate with the Astronomical League
    - Expand social events
  - Expand social media presence
  - Invest in marketing
  - Partner with county fairs, outdoor and environmental groups.
  - Women make up about 11-14% of our current membership
  - Define more jobs and get people more involved.
  - Requesting \$1,200.00/year to start.
- Slides from the February 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting will be posted on our website.

**Membership:** Steve Dittmar was present

- 1 new member

**Webmaster:** Steve Dittmar was present

- (Not discussed)

**Old Business:**

- (Not discussed)

**New Business:**

- (Not discussed)

**Upcoming Events:**

- (Not discussed).

**Reminders:**

- Paid members get access to club equipment (telescopes, imagers, trackers) and club DVD/VHS video library.
  1. See the website or Steve for a list of available items and how to pay to join the club.
- Paid members can also get access to the club Slack channels. Contact Steve or Eric for access.

**Observing Reports:**

- Nothing reported.

The business meeting was adjourned at 8:06 PM. There were 14 Zoom windows open at the end of the business meeting and approximately 11 people were in the auditorium. **The next meeting is February 17<sup>th</sup>, 2026, on Zoom and in person. Check MeetUp for details and link. Zoom link will be sent to all those that RSVP.**

As traditional the January presentation was “Telescopes 101: How to Set Up and Use that New Telescope You Got for Christmas” presented by Jack Chastain and other members of the club.

Submitted by James Rockrohr, February 13, 2026.

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MHAA Treasurer’s Report for February 2026

No report received

MHAA Membership Report for February 2026

As of February 14, 2026

Club Membership: 107 total

Members	Students	Honorary from SUNY New Paltz
96	9	2

Social Network Engagement

Slack	Meetup	Groups.io	Facebook	Instagram	YouTube
24 active of 129	2983	134	1284	252	589

Respectfully Submitted,
Steve Dittmar
President, Membership Coordinator

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| Date        | Arrival Time | Civil Dusk |
|-------------|--------------|------------|
| Feb 13 2026 | 5:30 PM      | 17:53 EST  |
| Mar 13 2026 | 7:00 PM      | 19:26 EDT  |
| Apr 17 2026 | 7:30 PM      | 20:07 EDT  |
| May 15 2026 | 8:00 PM      | 20:40 EDT  |
| Jun 12 2026 | 8:30 PM      | 21:05 EDT  |
| Jul 10 2026 | 8:30 PM      | 21:05 EDT  |
| Aug 14 2026 | 8:00 PM      | 20:27 EDT  |
| Sep 11 2026 | 7:00 PM      | 19:39 EDT  |
| Oct 9 2026  | 6:30 PM      | 18:51 EDT  |

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Directions To The Star Party Site

[Lake Taghkanic State Park](#) is in the town Ancram, NY. The park entrance is on the Taconic Parkway 10 minutes north of the exit used for Wilcox park.

Star Parties at Lake Taghkanic are held in the West Parking lot, next to the beach. The skies are darker than in Wilcox, with less stray light to deal with. The horizon is also much lower, especially to the south and east, making many more targets possible.

IMPORTANT: all events at Lake Taghkanic State Park require an **RSVP** which includes license plate number of the car you are bringing (please do so via [Meetup](#)). The park is patrolled by state police, and all non registered cars will be ticketed and risk our use of the park.

General Information:

- ♦ Dates listed for star parties are the primary dates. The rain date is the following night unless otherwise noted. Only one session is held for a given weekend, usually on the primary date, Friday, unless postponed (usually due to inclement weather) to the backup date, Saturday. Exceptions to this are noted in the “Scheduled Events” section above.
- ♦ All outdoor events are FREE! All are welcome. If you bring small children, it is your responsibility to keep a close eye on them. Please do not bring white-light flashlights. Instead, bring a red astronomer’s flashlight or an ordinary flashlight covered with several layers of red cellophane. If in doubt about the weather, check the status of the event at www.midhudsonastro.org.