

**Friends of Casco Bay  
Community Engagement Committee  
Meeting Minutes**

Tuesday, March 20, 2018, 4:00 – 5:00

Gulf of Maine Research Institute, Commercial Street, Portland

In attendance:

Board: Sandy Marsters (Chair), Malcolm Poole, Dan Brazeau, Seb Milardo, Bud Higgins, Althea McGirr

Staff: Cathy Ramsdell, Mary Cerullo, Will Everitt, Sarah Lyman

**Nurturing relationships with our giving pyramid of donors**

Will shared a few development metrics to help the Committee ponder a few topics:

- ❖ If we are to have a smaller, more exclusive Donor Appreciation Event, donors at what level should be invited?
- ❖ Think about donor metrics as we approach year end.
- ❖ Look at the impact our Boat Campaign has had on our donor metrics.

**Donor Appreciation Event considerations:** The attached Giving Pyramid by fiscal year focuses on Individual Donors and shows the number of households at various giving levels each year. Will shared that in FY18, which is not yet on the pyramid, 134 households have given \$500 and up. The \$250 and up giving level has been the “cut off” for our Donor Appreciation event in the past. As we consider recreating a more exclusive event and returning to the Cumberland Club, an invitation list that includes \$250 or \$500 donors is too large for the “comfortable” capacity of 80-90 attendees, including Board and Staff. Considering the Cumberland Club, inviting around 50 households is reasonable, which means the “cut off” might be \$2,000 and up. Dan asked if our Calendar Island Circle (monthly) donors are having an impact and suggested that if they are, they be considered for this special event. Calendar Island Circle is great for those who cannot give a \$100 check to us once a year, but can give \$120 if they give \$10 each month. Donors who are currently giving \$35 to \$240 a year are ideal for the monthly giving program. Malcolm said that another option for the Major Donor Appreciation Event is to keep the event like we did at the Harraseeket and use the Cumberland Club as an additional evening event, as a separate luncheon or something, where we invite 20-30 people to join a few key Board and Staff. We have been talking about adapting our Donor Appreciation Event and combining it with our Volunteer Appreciation Event, maybe calling it our Friends Appreciation Event.

**Baykeeper Boats Fund Impact on Donor Gift size:** Looking at the Donors by Gift Size chart, you can see the number of households that gave at each level, comparing FY17 & FY18 vs FY10 & FY11. Will chose this comparison to show the most recent two years to the two years before the public launch of our Baykeeper Boats Fund Campaign. We look at two years together because our Membership cycle actually extends over two fiscal years, and this include corporate gifts, as well as gifts from individuals. Will’s takeaway: We have seen a lot of growth! We got a lot out of doing the Boats Campaign. We were able to grow and it helped shift donors into middle ranges of giving. Cathy added that it is the strength of our multi-pronged approach: house parties, very targeted mailings, and campaigns that really encourage growth. Our intent starting around 12 years ago was to focus our efforts on individual donors, a place where we could have more targeted impact than, say corporate or government income.

Next steps: As we consider moving toward a campaign, it is good to look at these and other metrics to gauge what support we think we have in our community to help inform a campaign goal.

**Thinking about our donor metrics as we approach year end:** Looking at the Total by Size of Gift Chart, which compares those same two-year groups, you will see that the only level we have seen a drop in giving is the \$10,000 range. This is due mostly to corporate donors not renewing.

How to grow corporate support? Bud acknowledged that he has heard from Staff that the future of growth in giving is in individual donors, but that as he walked around town, he was not so sure that going after local businesses wouldn't be fruitful. Corporations have an interest in the Bay being healthy.

Cathy spoke about the shift in mindset we have seen with corporations over the past decade. The tendency of corporations has been to give to places where they get something, such as visibility or using our brand in return. We do get support through the Film Festival this way.

Cathy explained that many corporations are asking for nonprofits to "loan" their name or brand to for-profit entities, leveraging the nonprofit's name at point of sale. Once in a while we are approached and asked to put our logo on a company's product. They are hoping that by leveraging our brand, it will increase their sales. This means that our logo could be assisting those shareholders in profiting. So instead, we ask corporations that value a healthy Casco Bay to earn their profits and then donor it to us without quid pro quo or do a sponsorship where they do get some visibility beyond our public acknowledgements (in various forms). There are also other factors to consider, such as finding litter with our logo on it, or seeing our logo on a plastic product.

Bud said there might be some new messaging we could do around the fact that big companies can bring in great people because they are drawn to a thriving healthy Bay, thanks in part to our work. Bud shared that when he asks hospital staff about why they chose to come here or the best part of being here, they mention being next to the Bay and enjoying the Bay. The people these businesses attract benefit from what we at Friends of Casco Bay do every day.

Will agreed that there may be a way to change how we approach larger corporations and acknowledged that relationships matter and it can be harder to build relationships with medium to large sized corporations. These bigger corporations often have corporate giving committees that decide what to give to which groups. They start to act more like foundations, because decisions are made by committee. It is different because they report to the corporation board. Althea added that at smaller corporations, the person at the corporation needs to feel that unique relationship with an organization; at larger businesses, the whole deciding group does. With smaller corporations, if we cultivate the owners, it can be "individual like." At larger corporations, the set of people that makes the giving decisions changes each year, so even if we start to build relationship, it can be like starting over each year.

Jack asked that we explore having a "We support Friends of Casco Bay sticker" on the window of places like Andy's Old Port Pub. It provides a way to support what they are doing for community, while providing some visibility for us.

### **Preparing for summer house parties**

We plan to host two house parties this summer. One will be an intimate event in Harpswell. For the second house party, we would like to have it at a home along the coast somewhere from Cape Elizabeth to Freeport--ideally in Cumberland or Falmouth--at a property with a big open lawn where we can put up a large tent. This allows us to have a much larger invite list and not limit invitees to the neighborhood only. This allows for an event with around 150 attendees. Malcolm kindly offered Cape Elizabeth in September. We would like to have a party earlier in the year when there is more sunlight later into the evening.

Other ideas to explore: the campground of House Island, Casco Bay Lines boat, Fort Williams, the Casino at Little Diamond.

### **11th Anniversary Film Fest, Saturday, November 3**

We are gearing up for the Film Festival. We are about to start soliciting sponsors. It is a great way to get corporate support. Our general plan is to go back to format of the event before we did the special 10th Anniversary Event. We plan to keep ticket prices the same.

### **2017 Feedback forms summary**

A lot of personality and lots of contrasting comments

### **2018 Planning ahead**

Bud asked us to evaluate whether the event is still worth our staff time and effort. Cathy shared that she has been guiding staff through this internal conversation annually. While we do not net a lot financially from the event, the visibility and the in-kind media support we receive is tremendous, including WCLZ's \$35,000+ valued support and the support from Maine Media Collective. At this point, the event, when we use our "normal format," is templated and we pull it off smoothly. It is something we do well, and there does not seem to be a ton of fatigue in the community. If we saw a lack of quality and diversity from the Wild & Scenic Film selections available, we might reconsider. The topic of a bigger venue came up and at this point we do not know of a space that provides all the amenities: a big open lobby space for reception and raffle, easy parking, easy to find venue, ability to have a bar, and amazing A/V technology along with someone who can be our tech person. The idea of adding a second showing also was suggested, and this is logistically difficult. Getting folks out before a second showing as well as cleaning up the incredible mess that can be left behind would be daunting.