

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

Monday, October 7, 2019, 5-6:30 PM

Gulf of Maine Research Institute, Second floor conference room, Portland, ME

In attendance

Board: Sandy Marsters (Committee Chair), Malcolm Poole, David Kaufman, Seb Milardo, Bud Higgins,
Ann Thayer, Pat Ianni, Jack Thomas

Staff: Cathy Ramsdell, Will Everitt, Sarah Lyman

Before embarking on the agenda, Malcolm took a moment to give the committee a heads up and preview of a Board Meeting topic. Malcolm will be reviewing the purpose of the Board and the Staff at the Board Meeting next week. Malcolm noted that the organization has the luxury of being a Staff-run organization, with the Board providing consent, guidance, support, and encouragement. The work of this committee can be very creative and that is to be encouraged. Importantly, the Operating Plan is a crossroads between great ideas and the work-to-be-done. Ideas are reviewed before and during the process of the Staff's writing of the draft operating plan. Bud encouraged the larger discussion around this at the board meeting because it is important to have the lines clear and these can be blurred easily.

Cathy shared that the next Community Engagement Committee Meeting might be the place to discuss some of the ideas we have been tracking on the bottom of each committee agenda. We can start to parse out which are ripe for development for the next operating plan. As we think about FY21 (April 2020 - March 2021), we will need to remember that we have already embarked on elements that will make it a busy year because we have already committed to the Climate Change and Casco Bay Fund campaign and our 30th Anniversary event (mark your calendars: April 29, 2020), both of which will take significant time and attention.

Film Festival

We have sold out our 12th Annual Wild & Scenic Film Festival! **If anyone asks you about tickets, you can tell them:** Advance tickets for our Wild & Scenic Film Festival are sold out, but you still have the opportunity to buy tickets and attend the event! We will have a limited number of tickets available on Saturday, November 2nd, the day of the event. Tickets will be sold first-come, first-served. Price at the door will be \$35. Tickets sales will begin at 2 p.m. when doors open. Films start at 3 p.m.; please note this is an hour earlier than last year.

Raffle items: We need raffle items! Will shared the raffle donation request letter. Please consider asking 3-4 businesses you frequent to support the event by donating an item. Bringing the postcard along can be helpful as it makes it a bit more concrete. Consider gift certificates to restaurants, items from your favorite stores, or rain barrels, just to name a few ideas. This raffle brings in over \$2,000. **We need all items in the building by the end of the day on Monday, October 28th.**

Knack Factory update on 30th anniversary film-making process

Knack Factory, a local video production company based in Portland, is creating a 4-5 minute film about Casco Bay and our work to improve and protect its environmental health. They are very good at what they do and we are excited to see the end product. 98% of the filming is complete and 75% of the voice interviews are done. The film will premiere on Wednesday, April 29, 2020, as we host our 30th Anniversary Celebration at Ocean Gateway. Our hope is that the film will then be used in other places, including our 2020 Wild & Scenic Film Festival, social media, and even future volunteer orientations. It

features our work through the lens of four people: Cathy, Ivy, Joanie, and Tony Jessen, but it will not have talking heads like traditional documentary style films. The coordination of the filming, interviews, and flight with Light Hawk has been wonderfully handled by Will. It is a \$12,000 project and we will only be paying \$4,000 in cash and are providing sponsorship benefits. We will get all the footage from the filming as well.

Annual Fund Letters/Newsletter/Annual Report

Board Members will receive Annual Fund Letters this week. Cathy has signed all 1,300 letters in just a few days and now, Will, Sara, and Sarah will prepare and deliver them to you. You will then have almost two weeks to sign them, as we need them back on Monday, October 21, Volunteers start mailing them the next day.

The timing and content of our Annual Fund is very integrated with our communications work. Everyone receiving the Annual Fund, and an additional 6,000 people, are receiving our Fall newsletter this week. Two weeks later they will receive the Annual Fund ask. The Annual Report will be received by everyone just a few weeks later. They already received the invitation to the Film Festival in early September. Email communications, social media posts, and website posts are all coordinated during this time as well. Then, a few weeks after the Annual Fund letters are received, we follow up with an email reminder/ask to those who have not given. In addition, at the end of November, we run messaging on Maine Public Radio.

The special letters going out during this Annual Fund are to support our Water Reporter effort. They will go to those who have never given or those who only seem to give to Membership. Hopefully that first group will become annual membership donors. The special ask towards something specific gives the latter group that unique opportunity to give to something tangible with the hope that some may transition to the types of members who will give to the Annual Fund in addition to Membership each year. We are thinking about audiences all the time. We know there are always ways to further refine our messaging.

Bud remarked that the quality of our communications is impressive. The emails are captivating and it is great how the team is implementing them strategically and tactically. Communications have upticked dramatically over the last 2-3 years. Will shared that Mary Cerullo is an important piece of this process, we see her as in-house author and journalist. She drafts most of our communications content, then works with program staff, Mike, Ivy, and then Cathy, to make sure everything is accurate. Sara Biron makes sure we have the right images for each communication and the channels it will go out on, including social media. Most of our social media comes from our email content and we also post it on our website.

It has been interesting to see the variety of topics that get the most engagement. Pieces on simple metrics about the Bay, the pumpout boat names we did not use, and Ivy's appointment to the Maine Climate Council Working Group all received a lot of response, even though we did not ask for a reply with thoughts. And different people seem to take the time to reply to each. Variety is clearly important.

Climate Change and Casco Bay Fund campaign update

The campaign is going very well. Cathy and/or Will have met with all but two Board Members, both of whom are traveling. We are working toward 100% Board giving to the Fund. Cathy shared that it has been really nice to sit down with everyone. Of the \$1,500,000 goal, \$877,050 has been raised (58%!). Between now and the Film Festival, Will and Cathy will be working to continue to schedule in as many meetings with potential fund donors.

One bittersweet meeting was with AJ. He shared during the meeting that he planned to submit his resignation from the Board. Even with that news, it was a sincere, deep, and lovely conversation.

Volunteer metrics – end of summer season wrap – up

Water Reporter

Metrics: 190 members, 837 posts in the watershed since launching last year
18 algal blooms noted/tracked

Coastal Cleanups metrics so far this year:

22 Cleanups, 285 Participants
937 estimated lbs. of trash collected

Storm Drain Stenciling metrics so far this year:

4 events, 46 participants
322 storm drains stenciled
Steve Bushey is hoping to do a Stenciling Project this month.

Bud pointed out that the organization has positioned itself well to benefit from the bad news around climate change. With the new attention to climate issues, we are poised to benefit and see more donors and volunteers.

David and media relations

David has an ambitious media campaign idea that he would like to put into action. He has realized during his time on the Board that the strength of the organization is extremely impressive due to the staff, the board support and financial stability. He has been on a handful of boards and no other nonprofits have been as impressive as Friends of Casco Bay.

David is proposing to lean on his 35 years in the media industry to strategically approach most of the TV station affiliates (ABC, NBC, CBS), Maine Public and local radio stations. He would like to ask them to consider a pro bono advertising campaign to increase exposure of the Friends of Casco Bay brand to the households in the Casco Bay watershed. Then, it may make sense to approach the print media as well. The goal would be to leave a bigger imprint of Friends of Casco Bay in the greater community through repeated messaging across these channels.

An important consideration is staff capacity. Having the confluence with the 30th Anniversary and or the public phase of the campaign could be incredible timing. And it may be challenging capacity wise. We need to continue to formulate ideas and the plan and consider the timing.

David will follow staff needs and timing. If this moves forward as he hopes, he could reach out to the outlets and by December know if they are interested in taking part. With a typical 6 month lead time, the hope would be to roll this out in the summer or early fall. He is eager to do this before another organization tries to do something similar.

David will be looking to staff to identify the very best reasons that a company may want to partner with Friends of Casco Bay in this way. David sees his role as making the connections and getting the mechanics laid out. David will process this idea with staff and Cathy, and then bring to Board after things are clearer. It will be important to identify the things we really want to say. The wrong call to action will not be worth it. Cathy challenged everyone to think of catch phrases that will resonate.

David stressed that it is too early to know what product from this effort might look like, but a possible call to action would be to visit our website and make a donation. For those that make a donation, some swag would be a great as a thank you. Media are begging for content, so providing them with a menu of items we focus on would be great.