

Friends of Casco Bay Community Engagement Committee Minutes

Monday, November 4, 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, Bud Higgins, Steve Bushey,
Pat Ianni, Seb Milardo, Joan Samuleson

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

Film Festival Debrief

We have completed our 12th annual SYRCL's Wild & Scenic Film Festival on Tour. The event seemed to go like clockwork, and there were no major glitches. It is an impressive event. No one was turned away. We could have sold even more tickets because we had well over 100 open seats, despite more than selling out a month before the event. We will be more bold next year, letting folks know we are sold out but letting them know that seats free up and become available for late sale. We may add, "You likely won't be turned away." The buttons allow us to know how many seats are available without having to count empty seats in the auditorium. We always plan to have a buffer of around 30 buttons/seats as a safety since we are reselling the tickets should a sponsor show up at the last minute.

Overall, it was an excellent group of films. *Current Revolution* created a variety of reactions. Some felt it was not a great way to end and could have been condensed. It can be difficult to have the longest film at the very end, yet it seems like the best place for long films as long as the topic is right. It was noted that having any hint of political discourse causes some in the audience to lose the message because of today's political polarization.

We scanned the feedback forms, and the comments are all over the place as always, but it seems about 90% of responses were positive and there was less venting than in the past. Financially, we brought in \$1,000 more in ticket sales this year and about \$120 less in raffle sales compared to last year, likely due to the decrease in the number of people in attendance.

There was trash left behind in the auditorium, especially the balcony.

This event is a lot of work in the final week, but other than that it is an "out of a box" event. There is something about this formula that works well.

We discussed a few ideas including a waiting list, a larger venue, additional showings, or bringing volunteers in to help choose the films. The waiting list is too difficult considering folks hand back their tickets the day before and the day of the event. Instead, we will work on clarifying the language about tickets being available day of. A different, bigger location would need to meet our requirements for access to multiple pieces of tech that we need and the staff person to run it, a cash bar, and free parking. Additional showings might bring in more ticket sales, but not more sponsorships, in-kind support, or raffle items, so the costs would go up, and the net increase in ticket sales would be the only return. Bringing in new folks to review films would make scheduling more difficult and slow down the process. We felt that after 12 years of selecting films, we had the gravitas to show *Forest on Fire*, even though the subject was difficult. Cathy's opening comments really set the stage well for the difficult films.

Soliciting raffle prizes is an easy way to gain visibility for the organization, and many potential raffle donors asked questions about our work. Pat, who shared the reflection, said she might triple her effort next year.

Volunteers this year were great, including the Board Members who took part. Thank you! Everyone was really excited to participate. We have reserved a date for the 2020 event.

Gulf of Maine 2050 International Symposium, Nov. 4-8, Westin Harborview

Gulf of Maine 2050 International Symposium, focused on Climate Change, is a collaborative initiative of the Gulf of Maine Research Institute, the Gulf of Maine Council, and the Hunstman Marine Science Centre. Cathy, Ivy, Mike, and Mary are all attending as they can this week. Mike has a poster about our Continuous Monitoring Station data during one of the Poster Sessions/Happy Hours. Ivy is a panelist during one of the sessions, speaking about our work with the Maine Ocean and Coastal Acidification Partnership. Mary is helping facilitate Working Group brainstorming sessions. Governor Janet T. Mills was the opening speaker, followed by Ko Barrett, Vice Chair, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, and Rachel Cleetus, Policy Director, Climate and Energy Program, Union of Concerned Scientists.

Tuesday focuses on Sea Level Rise, Wednesday focuses on Ocean Acidification, and Thursday is focused on Ocean Warming. Many attendees pointed out how interconnected these issues are. Concerningly, many of the actual data results have been outpacing predictions. Scientists have been too conservative and have not been effective enough and need to work with behaviorists to create change.

Cathy shared some reflections on the opening day which she had just attended. Many of our key partners are in attendance. This event is so important, as it is convening the right people. Cathy took a moment to speak with Don Perkins and noted that we have to work together and we need to take advantage of every single opportunity to work with our community to create those behavioral changes. The millennials get it and are not too pleased about this issue starting to fall to them. They are focused on it and we need to move quickly. We will need to get out of our comfort zones to get on the right path. There will be winners and losers.

See all about the event here: <https://www.gulfofmaine2050.org/>

Donor Appreciation event

Thursday, December 5, 5-7 pm, Cumberland Club

This event is the Thursday after Thanksgiving. Thanks to Malcolm for being our host at the Cumberland Club each year. Those who donate \$500 or more are invited, which totals about 350 households and businesses. This event is especially exciting this year as it will be a 30th Anniversary-branded event. Last year at this event we shared that we had begun looking at the next ten years and the challenges ahead as we were starting work on the Climate Change and Casco Bay Fund campaign. This will be the first public update about the campaign that we share with those closest to us. We expect 70-80 individuals to attend. We will send the physical and electronic invitations this week. The Board role for this event is to come and be great ambassadors for us.

Annual Fund Letters/Newsletter/Annual Report

Volunteer involvement: First, Board Members, thank you all for signing all the letters. In addition to your time and dedication, we also had 8-10 volunteers come in to sort, assemble, stuff, seal, and stamp each letter. This works pays off. Just over the past 8-10 days, 56 donors contributed more than \$5,700 through the mailing. We were stunned by the new donor who gave \$1,000. This is someone who knows our work well and decided to give for the first time. We are seeing a divide in our giving due to the bifurcation of the economic strata.

Annual Report: We have a proof that will be reviewed this week and sent to the printer. This is the only regular piece designed by an outside designer, Kristen Stetson, with whom Mary has been working for 18 years. The Annual Report is sent at this time of year to complement mailing letters asking members to donate to the Annual Fund, and to the many members who renew in November and December. Those who receive Annual Fund letters have already received a series of mailings in the Fall: the invitation to the Film Festival in early September, the Newsletter in October, and the Annual Fund appeal two weeks later. The Annual Report is another reminder of our work, particularly as we approach the end of the year and the giving season. Email communications, social media posts, and website posts are all coordinated during this time as well.

Climate Change and Casco Bay Fund campaign update

Woodard & Curran Foundation grant award presentation

November 7, 3-4 pm, 41 Hutchins Drive, Portland

After, join the staff at Nonesuch River Brewery, 201 Gorham Rd, Scarborough

We hope you will join staff for the check presentation from Woodard & Curran Foundation for \$100,000 over 3 years toward the campaign. Afterward, we will celebrate at Nonesuch River Brewery, 210 Gorham Road, Scarborough. The campaign is at \$978,150 as of this morning. We learned of this opportunity through former Board Member Barry Sheff. We applied to their smaller grants earlier on, and Cathy and Will provided help as the Foundation was created and went through its first few years.

When the first opportunity for this water, community, and technology-focused grant came up last year, it seemed like a perfect fit for the Climate Change and Casco Bay Fund campaign, so Will and Cathy worked to fast track a plan for the campaign and put together a proposal. We were declined last year as the funds went to another nonprofit focused on education and kids, but we were one of five finalists. Cathy and Will learned a lot through the process, including that even folks steeped in the technical side of this work want to feel inspired and want a 10,000 foot view, not all the tiny specific details. This helped Cathy and Will to develop the language now in the case statement, which was submitted for this year's grant. Cathy reminded the interview committee of how far the campaign had come in just a year, and thanked the committee for their part in that.

Based on Joanie's idea, Will plans to ask about their digital ad at the airport and if they want to highlight this work.

Seb mentioned that another good ask would be to the Maine Community Foundation in February.

Cathy found that a recent handwritten thank you note to one of our higher donors as an update to the campaign was a great way to re-engage them, even if for just a short email exchange. This is so similar to the notes Board Members write in Annual Fund and Membership letters. That personal touch has an impact.

Receiving the gift from the Woodard & Curran Foundation gave Cathy took the opportunity to talk about foundation giving more generally, specifically annual grants towards Operations. We set the intention years ago to invest more effort toward individual giving, as that is where we are in some ways more "in control" rather than at the whim of changing funding priorities and guidelines by foundations and as many corporations have moved to quid-pro-quo giving.

Foundations often mention that our proposals are some of the best written proposals they have ever seen. In spite of that, we are seeing some changes with some of our larger foundation gifts. In recent years the Quimby Family Foundation, from which we had been receiving \$25,000-40,000 a year, decided to end

giving to groups with missions like ours. Similarly, we could usually rely on \$25,000 from the Elmina B. Sewall Foundation, but its Board now focuses on human equity and underserved communities outside of the Portland region. We were notified that we are being given one last opportunity to get funding from them.

30th Anniversary Event, Wed., April 29, 2020, Ocean Gateway

Generative discussion: Let's have some divergent thinking to generate any ideas about the 30th Anniversary Event! This will allow staff to have lots of ideas to consider as they start doing convergent thinking and narrowing down the specific components of the event.

The things we already have:

- Location: Ocean Gateway, off Commercial Street, Portland
- Date: April 29, 2020
- Caterer: Blue Elephant
- We will be launching the public phase of the Climate Change and Casco Bay Fund campaign
- The invitation to this event and any mailing post event will be part and parcel to the public launch of the campaign.
- Cathy and Ivy will talk about the work of day and work ahead for the next 10 and 30 years.
- The invitation will include an invite to the Annual Meeting portion of the evening, which will run before the celebration begins.
- The schedule will be Annual Meeting, Reception hour, a short-ish program, including the 4-minute film by Knack Factory, and at least one congressional video, then more reception time.
- We expect 200-250 people. There will be a big screen and we've hired Headlight Audio Video to take care of that.
- Campaign will help pay for some of the costs.

What are additional elements of an event like this? Let's brainstorm:

- This could be a good time for other people speak about Friends of Casco Bay, someone like the Governor or Bill Green or the female Maine astronaut from NASA. Though Cathy does a fantastic job, it would be nice to hear someone else as well.
- The Board could obtain quotes in answer to the question, Why is Friends of Casco Bay so effective? It could be posed to other local groups, local businesses, municipalities. i.e., Portland Water District, Island Institute, Portland, Harpswell, College of the Atlantic, Marine Resource Officers, Coast Guard, Larry Wold, LL Bean: 30 different voices for 30 years. They could be filmed or be a picture with the quote printed or shown digitally.
- Borrow the idea of Sea Bags mile banners used at Beach to Beacon to have vignettes as folks walk into Ocean Gateway. Maybe the different face of the voices. Anything on old sails would be very cool. Maine Public also worked with them.
- Capture what was, what is, and what could be. Board or others could help create a visual journey. Start with an image of the Bay before Friends of Casco Bay existed, images of the 30 years during Friends of Casco Bay's work, including the *Julie N* oil spill, sewage, the fish nets at Willard Beach, and cruise ships, to show what Casco Bay would ideally look like in the future, looking ahead 10 or 30 years. Show how the organization has matured over time, highlighting the accomplishments that happened each year.
- Tie into Maine's Bicentennial.
- Do something with young people at presentation. Ask them what Casco Bay means to them. Kids would say how important it is to them. School districts in CB could take on the project by helping with audio/visual. Maine Island kids! Or kids could get up and do a production of support. Whenever he is coming come to Casco Bay, Bud's grandson sings the Casco Bay song.
- At the Baykeeper Boat Christening event, Schooner Fare music was there. While music going on all night would be distracting, music for a few moments would be great.

- Having the fireboat or the Coast Guard cutter.
- Keynote speakers? Let's skip that. We've gone that route a couple of times, and the costs are usually high and the logistics complicated.
- Have multiple bars.

David shared that he's meeting next week with Cathy and Will. He hopes to have meetings with members of the media complete by the end of the year.