

# **Friends of Casco Bay**

## **Community Engagement Committee Meeting Minutes**

Monday, August 5, 2019, 5-6:30 PM

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

In attendance

Board: Sandy Marsters, Malcolm Poole, David Kaufman, Seb Milardo, Bud Higgins

Staff: Cathy Ramsdell, Will Everitt, Mary Cerullo, Sarah Lyman, Intern: Alexis Burns

### **Summer events to date**

- **Willardfest:** Sandy shared that it was very hot on the day of the event, and therefore not very well attended. Someone was generous and let Steve and Sandy use a tent, which they then shared with the folks representing [One Climate Future](#). Cathy pointed out that there are take away lessons from this experience. We as staff try to assess which external events provide “enough” return for the effort, so any time you are tabling as a Board Member and the situation is not right, you get to decide that staying is not worth it (not enough people, not the right people, too hot, etc.).
- **Volunteer efforts:**
  - **Water Reporter**

**Metrics:** 171 members, 583 Posts in the watershed  
18 Great Diamond Islanders attended an overview/training event on Monday, July 29th. Everyone was very engaged. Folks learned about the app and got their questions answered. Many questions focused on pesticide use and erosion. The feedback was positive, and they plan to do another event next year on a different topic.

Sandy mentioned that cell service in the east end of the Bay makes using Water Reporter there difficult.
  - **Coastal Cleanups metrics**

10 Cleanups, 164 Participants  
348.3 estimated lbs. of trash collected  
9 additional events planned
  - **Storm Drain Stenciling metrics**

4 events, 46 participants  
322 storm drains stenciled  
No additional events planned

The number of Storm Drain Stenciling and Coastal Cleanup events we are organizing this year are up, due to a few factors falling into place. First, we have more time this year than last year, when we were piloting Water Reporter and other new projects. Second, Sarah has been organizing these events for a few years now and is more experienced at successfully managing them. Third, having a wonderful, reliable intern, Alexis Burns, means more of these events can occur, letting Sarah can focus other work. This year, we learned that we can hold a coastal cleanup at the same location as soon as 4 days later. We also learned that corporate groups doing their volunteer days are less interested in storm drain stenciling. However, we lend out the kits to any volunteers who would like to take on stenciling an area themselves. If they are doing stenciling on their own, we usually provide a contact person in that community who should be notified in advance, such as someone in public works or the stormwater coordinator.

## **Development metrics: Board meeting preview!**

Will shared the development metrics packet in advance of a development presentation at a fall Board Meeting. Will finds it helpful to have a conversation about what he is seeing in the data with this committee prior to sharing the data with the whole board. He invited anyone to email him with additional thoughts or questions as they come to mind after the meeting.

Please note: The most recent data is for the last fiscal year, FY19 (April 1, 2018 through March 31, 2019).

Will walked everyone through the packet. Each board meeting, board members receive a financial report from Cathy; those numbers are about how much money we received from what sources (Individual, Foundation, Government, Corporate, etc.) for our work this year (and for our capital needs). Development metrics are about how we raised that money, the efforts, if you will (Membership, Annual Fund, etc.). The first page is about the number of gifts we received, the second is about the size of the gifts we receive from various sources. The third is an in-depth look at the Annual Fund, and the fourth lists the number of donor households in each community around the Bay and beyond. Finally, Will listed annual notes from FY08 to FY19 on interesting historical events related to giving and our history that we want to keep in mind as we review these numbers.

When you look at our financial reports in conjunction with our development metrics, you will see that while the number of donors went down slightly last fiscal year, our charitable income is up. Overall the number of individual donors are down but our average gift size is up. The number of donors went down by about 60 households, matching closely the numbers we had in FY16 and FY17.

This reflects what is being seen nationally. A recent Chronicle of Philanthropy article highlighted that overall, the number of individual donors is down but average gift size is up. As Will noted, the more affluent donors seem to be increasing their gifts. This is an indication of the growing wealth gap between people who have a lot of wealth and those who do not. We seem to be starting to see this same shift.

The slight fall off in smaller-level donors may also be due to the changes in the tax laws as well as the hiccups the markets were having in late December, when many households do their charitable giving.

Our renewal rate still tracks near 70% which is remarkable in the development world. Continuing to recruit new donors is essential to keeping this renewal rate up. New supporters tend to join us through the Annual Fund and House Parties, so Board Members' work around these efforts are essential. Bigger house parties, like this year's, allow us to reach more people (by inviting them) even if they do not attend the event.

Malcolm asked about the demographics around our donors and their giving. We do not have age data to confirm, but our donors definitely skew older.

Cathy shared that it has been remarkable over the past few years to have new donors joining who make very high level gifts. We suspect that our growing visibility is building goodwill for us among those who did not know us before.

Malcolm shared that we are very lucky to have such a professional approach to Development.

## **Cumberland house party, Wed., August 7, 5:30 – 7:30 p.m.**

Everything is coming together for this event, and we have 99 RSVPs. There is a 30-50% chance of thunder showers on Wednesday evening. We will hold the event rain or shine, but ask everyone to come ready to be flexible. If the radar indicates an incoming storm, we may adjust the planned timing for program, and hold remarks before 6:30 pm.

We would like help in a few areas for the event: one more Board Member at the bar and another to help welcome folks. Let's be ready to roll with whatever needs to happen and mingle with as many folks as possible.

We have had lots of great responses and numerous donations without even having the event yet. We are lucky Jack connected us with Brian and Carolyn Clement.

### **Climate Change and Casco Bay Fund campaign update**

Less than a million dollars to go! As of August 6, \$518,500 has been committed by only 7 donors so far. We are just getting started. Will and Cathy will continue to schedule meetings with donors, including Board Members. Cathy has decided to change the strategy by mailing donors a physical copy of the Case Statement as a meeting is scheduled. This gives the donor information before coming into the meeting, allowing the meeting to focus on questions they have and the face to face ask, which is the most important step.

One donor shared in a recent meeting that the case statement was one of the best she's ever seen. She is a straight shooter who has seen a lot of case statements as a foundation trustee.

Donors will be asked to really stretch what they can give. They can make these gifts as one-time gifts, pledges they pay over three years, or as planned gifts.

The primary goal for Board Members as we move forward in the campaign is to keep building relationships. We will continue to assess which donor meetings it makes sense to ask a Board Member attend due to the relationship that is already established. Malcolm recently provided a lot of gravitas to a recent meeting just by sharing a few words about how well-positioned the Board and the Staff are to do this work.

Will shared the new Ways to Give and Anchor Society brochures that we have developed. They are both support documents for the campaign and stand-alone materials. Both were designed in house by Sara Biron.

### **Film for FOCB 30th Anniversary**

We are very excited to be working with Knack Factory, a local film company based in Portland. They will be creating a 3-5 minute film about Casco Bay and our work to improve and protect its environmental health. The film will premiere on Wednesday, April 29, 2020, as we host our 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration at Ocean Gateway. Our hope is that the film can then be used in other places, including our 2020 Wild & Scenic Film Festival, social media, and even future volunteer orientations. It will likely include interviews with two staff and two supporters. It is a \$12,000 project and we will only be paying \$4,000 in cash and providing sponsorship benefits as well.

### **Film Festival update, Sat., Nov. 2**

South Yuba River Citizens League (SYRCL) started the Wild & Scenic Film Festival to celebrate inspiring activism through film. This will be our 12<sup>th</sup> year hosting an "on tour" version of this event. We have 500 guests at the Abromson Auditorium at the University of Southern Maine in Portland each year for this event.

Doors will open at 2 PM and reception will be from 2-3 PM. The first set of films is about 1.5 hours, then there is an intermission, and raffle, we hold the second set of films, again about 1.5 hours. We moved up the schedule this year to allow attendees to get out early enough, by 6:15 PM, to have dinner after. We try to show films that tell a good story, and ones that are hopeful, as we want people to leave feeling positive.

We'll see if the Maine Outdoor Film Festival has any films that are appropriate for our event this year and then make our final selections.

**Sponsorships to date:** \$11,800

**Board member sign up:** Sarah shared the opportunities for Board Members to take part in the event. Many Board Members signed up and the remaining opportunities will be shared at the September Board meeting.

**Raffle items:** We need raffle items! Will will send around the raffle donation request letter. Sandy suggested that every Board Member could ask 8-10 businesses you frequent to support the event by donating an item. Bringing the save the date card along can be helpful.

New members tend to join during this event due to the gift match opportunity offered at the event. We always get new folks at this event due to the extensive advertising, so this is a great opportunity that we will explore this year.

Bud suggested we consider capitalizing on all the excitement and energy at the event to build an invitation and expectation of everyone to become members. Cathy will explore the appropriate ways to do this during her remarks. Things that may support this ask: having an additional credit card payment tool to charge cards at the membership table all night, and/or an additional membership table.

## **Surfboard Raffle**

Allagash Brewing and Grain Surfboards have once again teamed up to create a surfboard, which is being raffled off to benefit our work. See it and all the details here: <https://www.cascobay.org/surfboard/>