

Friends of Casco Bay
Community Engagement Committee
Minutes of Meeting Monday, May 4, 2020
5-6:30 PM via Zoom Meeting

In attendance

Board: Sandy Marsters (Committee Chair), Stephen Bushey, Pat Ianni, Seb Milardo, David Kauffman, Bud Higgins, Malcolm Poole

Staff: Cathy Ramsdell, Will Everitt, Sarah Lyman, Sara Biron

Update on Membership and Annual Fund mailings

Monthly membership mailings are being prepared and mailed by Sara Biron, with Will now signing all of the ask letters, instead of Board Members, to decrease people interactions and the number of people handling the same materials.

Annual Fund: Franklin Printing is processing the Annual Fund and Special Appeal, which in total will be sent to about 2,000 recipients. Franklin always does a nice job printing materials; these letters have hand-written notes printed on them. These should be mailed out on Friday. The Special Appeal asks donors to support Water Quality Monitoring, specifically analyzing nitrogen samples.

Maine Public messaging

We budgeted for sponsorship messages on Maine Public Radio twice in FY21. The first was going to be this spring, timed around the 30th Anniversary event and public launch of the Climate Change and Casco Bay Fund. We are instead using the first round of underwriting in support of our annual fund mailing starting the week of May 18th. The messaging will be along the lines of “Celebrating 30 years of working with you to keep Casco Bay blue.” The hope is this will increase our visibility soon after folks receive their Annual Fund and Special Appeal letters.

Updates on recent events

Woodard & Curran Foundation We were awarded the Woodard & Curran Foundation’s Impact Grant last year, a \$100,000 grant over three years supporting our Climate Change and Casco Bay Fund. Because of this, Cathy was invited to join Woodard & Curran as they celebrated their sustainability efforts on Earth Day. Cathy presented online twice to a total of almost 300 Woodard & Curran staff across the country. This was an opportunity to review our work and specifically share our Continuous Monitoring Station data with donors, as the majority of Woodard & Curran Foundation funds come from employees.

City of Portland Earth Day Cathy was one of many local leaders featured in a mosaic of people in the City of Portland’s Sustainability office’s Earth Day video, which [can be seen here](#). Cathy also recorded a longer piece which will be part of a series of shorts they plan to release over time later this year.

Royal River Conservation Trust award Cathy and Friends of Casco Bay are honored to receive and share this Conservation Champion award. We were expecting RRCT’s promotion of this to start this last week, but we have not seen much thus far. We are following their lead and will share info when the time is right.

Water Reporter milestone

We have reached 1,000 Water Reporter posts in our watershed from when we started Water Reporter in July 2018 through now. This is more posts than any other group using Water Reporter.

This week, May 6-10th are great days for #sealevelrise posts on Water Reporter. Please consider taking part.

Future Casco Bay Matters Events

As we continue social distancing and following the Governor's phased plan, we are planning a series of Casco Bay Matters events online to continue to deliver elements of the operating plan. One of our core organizational values is great communication with our public(s). These short online events will showcase all three areas of our work, Science, Community Engagement, specifically Water Reporter, and Advocacy. We started with the advocacy-focused event last week. This week we have a meeting to talk about how Mike will present a few key aspects of our continuous monitoring station data at the next Board meeting. Then we will be considering how to shift that to something for a Casco Bay Matters virtual event.

Casco Bay Matters debrief: Board Members' Feedback

Cathy shared that she was proud of staff working on the details of the event. It was effective collaborative work. It was exciting to bring substantive content in this format for the first time to our audience.

This event was well received, and we got a lot of positive feedback. Attendees shared how professional and well done it was. Long time funder and former board member, Brigitte Kingsbury, someone who does not just hand out compliments and has participated in many events like this, shared that she found that the event was well-focused and that the graphics we used were excellent. Many folks who could not make it or tried to sign up after we met the 100 attendee limit sent nice emails to share their excitement.

Staff thought about the fundraising side and incorporated it into our communications plan. The biggest donors to our Climate Change advocacy work and other donors received special emails from Will, bringing their attention to the event.

Cathy shared that for future Casco Bay Matters events, we plan to keep the content to 8-20 minutes with time for Q&A, designing 20-40 minute events. This will allow us to deliver a digestible amount of information and leave folks wanting more rather than overwhelmed or feeling like the event dragged on. We will be determining topics and frequency. We will be increasing the limit on the number of participants on our Zoom account. It was nice to have two people moderating. Having a host is also nice. We continue early/special invites to Board Members and Major Donors.

What worked?

- Very well done. Informative.
- Professional.
- Impressive, technically.
- Pre-event emails were professional and helpful and first post event email was great.
- It had the right elements.
- Prepared question at the top of Q&A was really helpful. Especially one that created the positive, hopeful view.
- Good job on closing statements and wrap up.
- Ivy did a great job, the presentation was well organized and easy to follow.
- Ivy did a great job answering the question around the positive Climate Change impacts from the pandemic. Good phrasing: Unexpected consequences instead of silver linings.
- The 30 minute time block worked, it was impactful content and did not much risk losing the audience. It was short and focused, and attendees found it easy to be engaged. It did not overwhelm folks with information.
- We are sharing the whole recording, which is better than just sharing slides.
- Having an outside person involved worked.

What could be improved?

- The 30 minute timing was not kept to (went about 8 minutes longer). As we approach the set time, folks start to get distracted by the logistics. Keeping to time is important. Laying out the timing adequately is important too.
- Supplement with attachments to prepare attendees better for what to expect: agenda or outline.
- Follow up email could have one or two impactful pieces.

There were different viewpoints on the length and depth of the presentation, and the Q&A.

- Better accounting of the time needed for intros and tech walkthrough. To allow for this, event time should have been lengthened, or those pieces shortened.
- Ivy needed 5-10 minutes more. Allow for 20 minutes for the topic alone. Topic could have been more in depth. The Council is doing so much work, we could do updates monthly.
- Keep short and sweet, get nuggets of information.
- For people interested in the topic, when the presentation is too brief or too simple, they may feel they don't get anything out of them. Some depth is needed so folks walk away with some new knowledge.
- There was a lot of appetite for a longer Q&A. This short Q&A could have been extended by 5-10 minutes. Answer more or all the questions live, though balance is needed. If we answered all chat questions we could be on for hours. Acknowledge when the event's scheduled end time is coming up, wrap up the event and give people permission to leave, then keep going with questions.
- Some have been on events that are 60 minutes that held attention, and others have been on events where 60 minutes felt like forever.

Adjustment to events

Unfortunate cancellations of three events: 30th Anniversary Event, which would have been last week, the July house party at the LaBauve's, and the Film Festival. The LaBauves have generously offered their home on a rolling basis. Will and Cathy plan to have a virtual drink with them to thank them.

The Film Festival was a hard decision to make and was made over a few tough staff conversations. We were getting ready to send sponsorship requests in mid-March, when the impacts of COVID-19, and all the unknown were just beginning to hit businesses, our potential sponsors. Since ticket sales cover the costs of the event, the sponsorship money raised is what we net and actually goes towards programmatic work.

We considered a virtual event, as some other organizations have done, and determined that without the sponsorship funds, it made more sense to invest that time into an event that is closer to our mission. Board Members offered to be part of a film reviewing committee if staff decided to host a virtual event, to relieve staff of that time.

Communications with past sponsors, raffle item donors, and ticket buyers will be essential. We will explore giving an option to still support our work as we notify them of the event cancellation, acknowledging how much they love this event and how we are excited to host it again next year. These important communications will likely be done in June, to maintain these relationships. We'll look to see about partnering with WCLZ, the radio station that gives us so much visibility for the Film Festival, in a different way.

We are holding the venue date at USM, as there is no penalty for doing so at this point.

Future opportunities: How do we continue to engage the community in our work? The Casco Bay Matters series is one way, and we are also looking at creating 2-3 minute videos on different aspects of our work. Mike is working through the tech challenges for the first, a video about the Continuous Monitoring Station. We will share these in weekly emails, social media, and on the website.

We also have all the elements of the 30th Anniversary Event, Annual Meeting, and other things we were going to do this year; we can assess how best to use the various elements to deliver in a different way. Cathy and Will have had a conversation about this and are starting discussions with the rest of the staff.

Share what YOU see that is working and what is not working for other organizations

Sandy asked Board members to share what they see other organizations doing that is working and what is not working. We may want to emulate or learn from these ideas. Malcolm shared that a gala event he was going to attend was cancelled and everyone was asked to give what they gave last year.