

**Friends of Casco Bay**  
**Community Engagement Committee meeting minutes**  
Monday, July 6, 2020, 5-6:30 PM via Zoom Meeting

In attendance

Board: Committee Chair Seb Milardo, Sandy Marsters, Stephen Bushey, Pat Ianni, David Kauffman, Bud Higgins, Malcolm Poole, Jack Thomas, Lori Thayer

Staff: Cathy Ramsdell, Sarah Lyman, Sara Biron

Seb started the meeting with an appreciation for Sandy and his leadership of this committee.

**Debrief of 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Members Annual Meeting**  
**Celebrating 30 Years and Members Annual Meeting - Tuesday, June 16, 5 - 5:45 PM**  
**What worked? What could have been better?**

Board Members shared their thoughts:

- Annual Meeting covered the bare minimum needed for governance. Let's move away from virtual when we can and limit the virtual events.
- Many liked the testimonials a lot, and suggested looking for ways to reuse them, maybe with music.
- It was bare bones but efficient.
- It was great, went smoothly. Technically, it went perfectly.
- Gulf of Maine Research Institute held an event at the same time. Ours seemed to go smoother, had the same or more participation, and was more appealing visually. Both suffered from not being in person together.
- Mixing up content and style will be important as people get tired or stop attending events with the same formula. Especially with so many people having Zoom fatigue.
- Event was recorded and separated into 3 videos that can be found on our [website](#). They were sent out in an email, and each video has 30-40 views, this far.
- Cathy did an amazing job delivering as always. Cathy mentioned that it is hard to deliver as one would in person because there is no chemistry with the audience. Pat encouraged Cathy to not be too hard on herself, especially now that many folks are becoming immune to the weirdness of the platform.
- Very well done. As a people person, one way to "work the crowd" is to share how many people are on the call and encourage folks to say hi to each other in the chat.
- Look for ways to bring some lightness in with fun backgrounds or humor, as appropriate.

Cathy shared: While 142 registered, 80 participated. The event had a lot of elements to juggle: the testimonials, the tech instructions, introductions, congressional films, the Annual Meeting by Malcolm, Cathy's keynote presentation, which had two parts, and Q&A.

See people weighing in and saying "Hi" in the chat is a great way to bring people into the "room."

We plan to do even shorter events. It seems that we are stuck with online formats for now, and we will find ways to offer different flavors and styles of event. We certainly plan to use the testimonials again, including adding them to the website in some form.

Sarah shared that the best part of these events is seeing it come together and seeing them be successful for our audience, and the hardest part is the anxiousness staff experience beforehand. We hold ourselves to a high standard and we want to deliver to that standard.

## **Pumpout Boat Suspended for the Season**

An email notifying customers that the Pumpout Service is suspended for the 2020 season was sent June 25. Staff and the Executive Committee spent a lot of time prior ensuring the language was just right. We also coordinated sending it at a time Jeff had capacity for an influx of replies. In addition, Cathy, Will, and Jeff took time to make personal calls to important supporters of our Pumpout Program, including Pam Parker from the Department of Environmental Protection and Pat Cloutier from city of South Portland Water Resources. As has been reinforced in other difficult situations or changes, making these calls matters.

One of these calls was to the owner of Port Harbor Marine, who donates slip space for the Pumpout Boat and the Baykeeper Boat. That call went surprisingly well. Cathy was very clear in delivering the message, including encouraging them to lease the slip out.

The email was delivered to 489 people, with 39% opening it, and 70% of those clicking through to the various links. Email replies included two positive messages, one neutral message and three negative messages that noted concern for the Bay and the poor practices folks may utilize. We were prepared for many more messages and much more negativity.

Now that the customer phase is complete, the boat is being emptied, hauled, and will be winterized for storage. When other program elements are sorted, it will be shared as appropriate.

Sandy, as Board President, is forming the Pumpout committee, which will partake in discussions about the Pumpout Program moving forward, including a discussion of reengineering options. That committee will consist of Sandy, Ann Thayer, Malcolm Poole, David Kaufmann, and Staff will include Cathy and Jeff, with Will joining as appropriate for communications and development purposes. The company that built our new boat's pumpout system is looking into re-engineering the pumps. Creating a better system for when removing sewage from a customer's boat is in the works. What is not as easy is creating a new system for when emptying the holding tank of the pumpout vessel. Cathy suggested to wait to see what pump builders can do, before investing too much in other reengineering options. Sandy asked the committee to hold an initial meeting in the next month. Cathy shared that Pam Parker of the DEP has been worried for years about what may be in aerosols, and noted on her call that we do not know how much build up there may be in the system. The World Health Organization has noted aerosol transmission of COVID-19, not just droplets.

## **2<sup>nd</sup> 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Event - July 27th, 5 pm - Registration required**

### **Celebrating Water - 30 Years of Friends of Casco Bay: A Film, A Poem, and A Conversation with Gary Lawless**

We are excited about this event, especially because it is different for us. The elements of this 45 min or less event include: the testimonial slideshow, tech orientation, Cathy welcome, our 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary film by Knack Factory, Gary Lawless reading the poem he wrote about Casco Bay, and a conversation between Cathy and Gary about the importance of place. Cathy will also give a brief update on the Climate Change and Casco Bay Fund, to propel attendees to support the campaign.

The conversation section will likely feel very different from our typical event, even though it will stem from some scripted interview questions.

**Action for Board Members:** You should have received an invitation via email in the past hour. After this call, please take a moment and register, no matter if you can attend or not. That way you have the information to attend should your plans change.

## **Campaign Mailing expected to be sent out to coincide with this event - 7,300 packets**

Will and Sara Biron have done an amazing job updating the Case Statement and all of the materials that go along with it, including a special return envelope, a letter from Cathy with a giving pyramid on the back, and the ten year budget spread. It will be a nice package.

These will go out with first class stamps; we purchased \$12,000 in postage from Cliff Island Post Office. Just a small way we support island communities.

Once this is mailed, there will be a lot of work for Cathy, Sara, Jeff, and Will to process all of the gifts and get acknowledgements out.

Board Members shared that this moving forward is terrific and exciting. Even those who do not contribute will get to see this beautiful piece and will learn more about our work and our history.

## **Other recent and upcoming events:**

### **Allagash Beer for a Year raffle, July 2-3**

Allagash Brewing Company is celebrating their 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year and has chosen to partner with us during their 25 Days of Giving series in July. From Thursday, 7/2 to Friday, 7/3, Allagash sold raffle tickets in person at the brewery for a case of beer per month...for a year! All proceeds go to Friends of Casco Bay.

We will see something, however we are not sure how much, as this is different from previous raffles they have done for us, in part because raffle tickets could be purchased online. We also received some extra visibility on social media over those two days.

### **Greendrinks event, August 11**

Greendrinks chose us as the beneficiary for their August event this year. Greendrinks is a social event shared among people working in, or interested in, environmental and sustainability issues. They often pair with local breweries, and other spirit makers. This will be a Facebook Live event. Staff are working to try and make the virtual event interesting and different. This will also include a pitch for people to donate.

### **TBD in September, Casco Bay Matters based on science and advocacy on climate change**

Likely in late September, we will host another substantive Casco Bay Matters event, on Science, specifically responding to Climate Change. This will be a part of the series of efforts to have a phased launch for the Climate Change and Casco Bay Fund, by creating easy reminders every few weeks for potential donors to donate.

We are considering another 30<sup>th</sup> event. If this idea moves forward, we would show our 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary film again and host an interview with the film makers.

## **Water Reporter update [5 minutes]**

Ever since the Water Reporter training the number of Water Reporter posts has increased by almost one third. It is going very well. Regular users are enhancing their posts and many more folks are joining or reengaging. Water Reporters have posted about many algal blooms and other changes we would not otherwise know about. This is especially important at this time, as things are still different due to the pandemic.

As someone pointed out to Cathy recently, we are a group that has kept things going without skipping a beat. In addition to the data being collected every hour through the Continuous Monitoring Station, our sampling around the Bay continues, as does our Baykeeping work, from the Maine Climate Council, to ordinance work, to permit comments, and more.

While typically this time of year we would be having numerous coastal cleanups and some storm drain stenciling, we instead have the Water Reporter observing program.

These meaningful observations are making a difference. While it took some time to find the right low threshold yet impactful effort, this is the right one.

This is a group staff effort with Mike and Ivy engaging in this work regularly, often scoping out locations after seeing reports, with Sarah coordinating and our summer intern Makayla helping.

Sarah will be listening for the felt need of our Water Reporters to design the next training. We may also hold Water Reporter office hours in a few weeks. We will also continue our work with the developers.

Board Members shared that this is a story worth telling. Volunteer Water Reporters are actually making a difference with these efforts. It was suggested that we look for ways to get the story out there. Though we have had some media coverage, this is a very different year. David is happy to push it out to TV, who may appreciate being able to share some good news stories for the news. Focus on citizen involvement, and education. We can also go back to 207 and see if they might be interested.

### **Board members signing renewal letters once again? Risks, concerns, and Board willingness?**

Cathy reminded everyone that all letters sent from our office include a handwritten note. That means monthly Membership asks, bi-annual Annual Fund asks, and daily Thank you letters. When the pandemic first started in Maine, we were concerned about the possibility of the virus being spread as piles of paper were being exchanged. Therefore, Will has been signing all of the Membership Ask letters and most of the Thank You letters. Sara has also been signing some acknowledgement letters.

Is this the right time to shift the policy back to Board Members signing letters?

Malcolm, Sandy, Bud, and Seb all shared that they are totally comfortable signing letters again. Research on the virus surviving on surfaces makes folks comfortable restarting this. Sarah noted that it may be possible to start this this month. (Will is signing for July, but board members could begin signing letters in August).

Bud shared that it is impossible to stop interacting with the world until we know all the answers. He did note that with his work in Nantucket, he will certainly be exposed to COVID. To take extra precautions, he would not sign the letters for ten days after returning.

Cathy noted that everyone has a different level of risk tolerance. For Board Members who are willing to, and are healthy, we will restart this process. Will will be in touch.