

**Friends of Casco Bay**  
**Community Engagement Committee Meeting Minutes**  
Wednesday, September 9, 2020, 5-6:00 PM  
Via Zoom

**Attendees:**

Board: Seb Milardo (Committee Chair), Sandy Marsters, Stephen Bushey, Pat Ianni, David Kauffman, Bud Higgins, Malcolm Poole, Joanie Samuelson, Ann Thayer, Lori Thayer  
Staff: Cathy Ramsdell, Will Everitt, Sarah Lyman, Sara Biron

**Casco Bay Matters event in September**

**Mark your calendar: October 21, 12:15 - 1 PM**

This Casco Bay Matters Event will focus on climate change data and advocacy. We will use real data on stormwater pollution and how it is exacerbated by changing weather patterns and temperatures caused by climate change. Mike will cover the scientific aspects and how our data are being used. Ivy will focus on what is being seen around the Bay. She will discuss local ordinances and updating state regulations to help address impacts climate change impacts that we are experiencing. Cathy will start the event by describing the big picture of our work at the beginning and offering closing comments. The event will include Q&A.

This event is another “kickoff” for encouraging support for the Climate Change and Casco Bay Fund. We will discuss the additional data that will be collected with the two new Continuous Monitoring Stations and how we look forward to using the data.

Cathy asked Board Members to encourage folks to join this event, once we start promoting it.

We are considering two other online events this year: a conversation with Knack Factory, the filmmakers who created our film, and a Donor Appreciation event in early December (likely December 3).

**Climate Change and Casco Bay Fund - Campaign Update**

**Progress:**

Since launching the public phase of the campaign July 30<sup>th</sup>, we have gone from having 52 Climate Change and Casco Bay Fund donors to 239. During the public phase, donations have ranged from \$5 to \$10,000, totaling more than \$83,000. 35 of those donors are brand new to us and a third of these new donors made gifts of \$250 or more. We have raised over 91%, leaving only \$130,000 to go.

**Next steps:**

- There are major donors, people who already support us with significant gifts, who have not supported the campaign and have not been invited to meet with Cathy to get a personal invitation to take part. Will will be reaching out via email to offer times Cathy is available to meet with them, via phone or zoom, through the fall.
- The Annual Fund will also be a tool to encourage gifts to the fund: the special appeal portion of the mailing will be an invitation to support the Fund, and will only be sent to appropriate people.

**Closure to campaign:**

A few possible ways to bring this campaign to an end:

- We reach the goal.
- We continue with our the plan, seeing how far we get by the end of the calendar year.
- We continue the campaign until October 2021, completing the 3-year time span we allotted.
- We can call victory anytime we want.

The plan, for now, is to continue as described above with virtual donor meetings and the special appeal, and then assess next steps. Cathy would like time to experiment with these virtual meetings. She can learn how well they work and perhaps what ways work best, in this time, and then explore whether the Board can help close any remaining gap. This would be to help set folks up for success. In the meantime, if there is anyone you think Cathy should meet with, please let Will know as he is coordinating the campaign.

Side bar, yet related conversation: Is there a sense that the pandemic is impacting people's concern about climate change? Possibly, distracting them from it?

- For many of the people in our circles, climate change is on their mind.
- It is very hard to know if climate change is on the mind of the people who haven't given to the Fund.
- Dozens of people who have given are first time donors, a small goal of this campaign is to grow our list of supporters and we are meeting that goal.
- We have approximately 24,000 households in the database, 7,300 were sent the mailing.
- All membership letters since April have had both a P.S. and an additional note acknowledging the extraordinary times, offering to our donors that if they are unable to make a membership donation to let us know and we will renew their membership for free and not solicit them again this year. Two people, of the hundreds who received letters, have requested this.
- Restaurant and performing arts industries are being hit very hard. In other industries, lots of people are still working and/or have investment wealth. The pandemic seems to be widening the wealth gap.

Have we tracked reactions to the campaign?

One couple sent a letter saying we need to work on lowering carbon emissions, not monitoring and data collection [not understanding that our advocacy is focused on that, too]. Another donor with whom we met last fall declined to take part. Others have shared positive feedback. They like the package, both the content and the design of it. Credit goes to Cathy and Sara Biron respectively. Donors have also liked the budget being spread over 10 years and the transparency in that.

It is important to note that folks heard from us multiple times, without being asked for a donation before receiving this; this is our policy/approach to any fundraising we do – information and invitations first, before asks for financial support.

### **Development Metrics: what questions do you have?**

Will asked: What questions do you have? Is there anything recommended to talk to the whole board about?

Two things were noted: The number of donor households has been around 1,000-1,296 FY16-FY20. This compared to the number of households in our database and around the Bay shows a potential upside.

The growth in dollar support is great, as is the 72% renewal rate. The benchmark for a renewal rate is 55-65%.

Will reiterated that the number of individuals giving to us increased in spite of the changes to the tax code and all the concerns around that. The growth is a result of our Cumberland house party and acquisition mailings to waterfront property owners. Corporate giving is still decreasing.

### **FY20 Online Communications Metrics: how we measure engagement of our online audiences**

Our Online Communications are a great way to engage and inform our public. We redesigned our “new” website from the ground up and published it in FY18. We made our website the center of our communications efforts, using email and social media to drive eyes to the site. It is the repository of our stories, videos, and data. Our email communications are vital and drive traffic to our website.

The [FY20 Online Communications Metrics can be downloaded for viewing or printing here](#).

Sarah oriented everyone to the metrics. The first two pages focus on website metrics, showing data in two different forms. The third page shows email metrics. The fourth page shows social media metrics, and the final page is a new report about our YouTube video channel.

Throughout the document, you will see markups. These are to highlight some interesting metrics.

- Website Metrics: Mobile and Tablet Visits, Percentage of Visits from Social Media Sites, Number of Pages and Posts Published
- Email Metrics: Open Rate, Total Number of Emails Sent
- Youtube Metrics: Watch Time, compared to Average Video Length

We can revisit these data at future meetings.

**To ponder before the next meeting: this Committee’s meetings and format: what is working for you? How can we improve this Committee and these meetings?**

Seb shared that at the October Community Engagement Committee Meeting, we will take 10-15 minutes to debrief the meeting format.

It has been running in this style for a couple of years, and it is good to reflect on what is working and what is not. We will consider the following questions:

- What is working for you? What should we continue?
- What should we do that we are not doing?
- What should we stop doing?

Cathy shared that the committee is invaluable for staff and that truncated meetings make it difficult when the conversations are full with helpful exchanges.

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Items on the agenda, not covered due to time constraints:

1. Haiku challenge: help us develop an idea we have for creatively engaging our Friends
2. Debrief of summer events:
  - August 11: Greendrinks Facebook Live event [video of the event can be found here: <https://www.facebook.com/FriendsofCascoBay/videos/327721605036194>]
  - August 13: Royal River Conservation Trust Conservation Champion Awards

Additional summer events included

June 3	Water Reporter Training
June 16	30 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary Members Annual Meeting and About Our Work
July 27	Celebrating Water with Gary Lawless, 30 years of Friends of Casco Bay