

**Friends of Casco Bay**  
**Community Engagement Committee**  
**Meeting Minutes**

Monday, November 2, 2020, 5-6:00 PM

Via Zoom

In attendance

Board: Committee Chair Seb Milardo, Sandy Marsters, Bud Higgins, Pat Ianni, David Kaufman,  
Malcolm Poole, Joanie Samuelson, Lori Thayer

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

**Summary:**

- Overall, the reaction to the October Casco Bay Matters event was positive; there were some suggestions around how to improve future events, including reducing interruptions between speakers.
- Board Members generated and brainstormed many great ideas for future events, including a film event with a post event discussion, interviews or panel events with folks from other partner organizations, or other individuals. Topics of interest included climate change, history of the islands, and conversations with those who have livelihoods based on our marine waters. Staff will use the operating planning process in the coming months to vet and ground ideas.
- Board Members volunteered to hand-write thank you notes to our top donors. This is a great effort in lieu of the invitation that we would normally send to our donors for the Donor Appreciation event this time of year.

**Debrief of Casco Bay Matters Event**

- Good event, well done.
- Many superb things during this event and in general it was very good.
- Consider offering to answer questions asked in chat that were unable to be answered during the event. Most other online event organizers offer to do this. There were about a half dozen that were left unanswered.
- Really neat event. Liked informality of it, though interrupting may have made viewers uncomfortable. There is a very delicate balance between a good free for all, unscripted discussion and not having interruptions that are uncomfortable.
- Housekeeping section takes up more time than we would like. Three presenters, all with different styles of delivery is difficult. Sometimes others picked up the conversation before Mike had a chance to speak and that was distracting at best.
- Cathy shared that this feedback is invaluable, then added that she has had some discussions that jived with this feedback. Moving forward, Casco Bay Matters Events will likely have one of two formats. One with formal presentations for topics that lend to that, and another format more casual and conversational and with only two folks having the conversation. For those conversational events, we will be sure to be very clear with the audience at the beginning that this will be a more casual event.
- One omission was to answer what do the data or the observation mean. The audience is listening to learn. For example, what do the increasing temperatures and changes in salinity mean? How might warming impact the Bay? It would have been helpful to speak to these or send a one pager after the event to summarize or give more insight. Time is short during the events, sending something post event allows for more insight to be shared without covering primers or everything during one event.
- Good job Cathy, Mike, and Ivy, talking about the Climate Change and Casco Bay Fund. That was very compelling.

### **Data on our online events so far this year**

Ahead of the meeting, two pages of metrics were shared. The first was on FY21 Friends of Casco Bay Events. This shows the 10 online events we have offered since our fiscal year, and the pandemic, started. In mid-March when it was clear we would not be able to hold our 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary event or other events in person, we pivoted and offered our first ever online event just over a month later (late April). Since then, we have learned from each online event and adapted, offering different types of events. We “recycled” ideas from our planned 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary event. Others were brand new offerings based on the needs of our community.

For most of these events, over 100 people registered and a high percentage of people who registered attended. The total user column on the page of metrics shows the minimum number for people who experienced the event, as we know many partners watch together on one screen.

Most of these events have been recorded. We have been able to share and reuse the content, reaching a wider audience than is shown in these metrics. In addition, the Harpswell Community Television Station would like to replay at least one of these events.

Suggestion was made for getting more community input for future events: consider surveying anyone who attended these events. Ask, what made you want to participate in the event(s)? What did you learn? What can we do to enhance the online experience? It was suggested to do this in 3-4 months or when we start to be able to remerge.

While many folks are sharing that they cannot wait for in person events to resume, and that is true, it is also true that online events are a convenient for many and bring us together in a different way. Just assuming the old way of doing things is the right way may not be the best decision. A combination of online and in person events might be best in the future. A survey would help explore that question.

### **New ideas for online events moving forward: generating and brainstorming ideas**

**What kind of online event would excite you? In other online events you have attended, what aspects have resonated with you?**

- Cathy pairs up with Maine Audubon to discuss winter birding on Casco Bay.
- Pairing with another organization like Maine Audubon or GMRI to help people understand interconnectedness of groups and how they are working individually and together to achieve larger goals.
- Climate change is a complex issue that is important to our work and to many people. We can be a voice of authority around the topic and share what is most important within that realm and/or give opportunity for others to share their work.
- Host an online movie night showing a film related to climate change. This would pull people together and keep people thinking about the issue. We could hold discussion groups afterwards.
- Maine Historical Society just had a great event with John Bunker, Maine heirloom apple expert, wonderfully enthusiastic when talking about the history of Maine apples. What is the Casco Bay version of that? Simple dialogue between Cathy and someone with a historical understanding of the Bay. Many options: Peaks historian with incredible knowledge and photos, historians of Jewel Island, and Cushing Island, Ford Reiche who would focus on Halfway Rock.
- Could start with a 10 min update on our work/the Bay and then have the historical conversation or invite the guest to speak about the topic of interest before questions.
- While we cannot congregate for beach cleanups, hold a virtual winter cleanup and everyone invited to share their experience after participating.

- Invite lobstermen or clammers from different parts of the Bay, see if there are differences in areas of the Bay. Learn about their work and experience of the Bay day in and day out.
- Invite someone from Bigelow Laboratory for Ocean Sciences to be a part of an event. Not to direct attention to their work and away from ours, but to focus on the topic of climate change research in a different way. Hosting them still promotes us and enhances our image.
- Gary Lawless resonated with people. Learn from that.
- Talk about diversity of people we work with, including commercial partners, others, endless possibilities.
- Host panelist events, but have a hook. One possibility: what is Friends doing now.
- Bring in scientists from UNE, USM, Bowdoin. This would entice people from those communities to take part and help us reach new audiences.
- Host cooking event where attendees get sustainable seafood in advance and cook in real time.
- Ivy interview Maine Climate Council leaders
- Note: The organizers of the Wild & Scenic Film Festival moved events online. We opted out of this option knowing that most businesses would not be able to support us March-May of this year, when we secure sponsorship support. That support is essential to the financial success of the event. Large part of value of event is in gathering.

If you think of individuals or topic areas that you would like to see covered during future events, please let Cathy know.

#### **Board Member volunteer opportunity: writing thank you notes to donors (10 minutes)**

Normally this time of year we invite folks to a Donor Appreciation event at the Cumberland Club. Since this event is not possible, Seb and Sandy planted the seed for an alternative.

The idea is for Board Members to each write handwritten thank you notes to folks who have already donated this year. (These are not asks, just simple thank you's.) Recipients will be top donors this calendar year. Notes would be written on 5 5/8 × 8 1/4 paper with our logo. Sample notes will be provided, as will paper, envelopes, a list of donors, their addresses, and stamps. Each note will have to be photographed or scanned by you and sent to Will before dropping in the mail because we keep records for everything we send to each of these donors.

We are looking for a commitment from Board Members to complete this before Thanksgiving. Many Board Members signed up, and Will will follow up with Board members not present. Please remember: many of you will be asked to add prescript notes to many Membership letters this month, as it is our largest month of the year for Membership. However, just like in the spring, Board Members are not writing Annual Fund notes, due to the pandemic. Please commit only to what you can realistically do before the deadline.

#### **Volunteer metrics**

The second page of metrics shared ahead of the meeting focused on our volunteer metrics. Sarah asked if there were any questions about them. Numbers are impressive, 1000% increases in some of these, well done. If you have questions about these metrics, reach out to Cathy and Sarah.

#### **Update on Staff Writer applications & Climate Change and Casco Bay Fund**

20 applicants so far. Staff will not review until the posting closes on November 23. Cathy and Will are thinking about the screening and onboarding processes. The interview process will begin in December. January might be the earliest timing for a hire.

The Climate Change and Casco Bay Fund has reached 93.99%, leaving just \$90,000 to go.