

**Friends of Casco Bay
Board Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, November 17, 2020 online via Zoom**

Board: Board President Sandy Marsters, Steve Bushey, Mark Green, Bud Higgins, Pat Ianni, David Kaufman, Seb Milardo, Malcolm Poole, Lori Thayer, Jack Thomas

Staff: Sara Biron, Mike Doan, Will Everitt, Ivy Frignoca, Sarah Lyman, Cathy Ramsdell

Welcome, Sandy Marsters, President

Sandy welcomed everyone and reminded us that this is the last board meeting of the year. We have no board meeting in December and will start meeting again in January. In January, we will go back to meeting at 5:30 to allow easier attendance by more Board members.

Board Consent Package Action Item

Motion: The minutes and financials were accepted as presented: PASSED. Malcolm thanked Cathy for her good financial stewardship.

Community Engagement Committee Seb Milardo, Chair of Community Engagement Committee

At the last Committee meeting, we debriefed the Casco Bay Matters event. The focus of the debrief was how to make these events better. We had a complementary discussion about what other kind of online and Casco Bay Matters events we might have that would be of interest to the public. We generated a lot of good ideas, including doing shared events with other organizations (for example, with Maine Audubon on birding on the Bay or with historians on the history of Casco Bay islands) and surveying our members to see what they may be interested in. Cathy and the team will evaluate what may make sense moving forward.

We discussed the thank you note campaign to our most generous donors.

Sarah reviewed the volunteer metrics. Kudos to her for growing our volunteer base. Finally, we have a lot of applications for the Staff Writer position. In brief, the Committee meeting was all about brainstorming ideas for us to engage the community, leaving it to staff to work out details in the operating plan moving forward.

Baykeeper Update Casco Baykeeper Ivy Frignoca

Ivy's update focused on the MS4 stormwater permit. All of this is confidential. As you may remember, we submitted numerous comments on versions of the draft permit, over the past three years. In the final draft, we were happy that it included provisions we for which we have been advocating: meaningful monitoring and testing for pollutants, requirements to use low impact development, and actions to improve already-impaired waters. The permit came out on October 15, and for no reasons we could discern, the DEP left out the requirements that were in the final draft for low impact development and actions to improve impaired waters. DEP staff did not have clear explanations for why they were left out—it may have been a mistake, but nonetheless, the final permit was issued without them.

The only way to address the deficiencies of the permit is to appeal it.

We could have appealed the final permit in two ways, through the Board of Environmental Protection or through superior court. We chose to appeal the permit to the Board of Environmental Protection, as that is a less controversial and less aggressive approach. To be clear, this is not a lawsuit, it is an administrative appeal.

The appeal is on very narrow grounds: it appeals the timing, lack of low impact development, and requests reinstatement of the requirement to have clear, measurable actions to restore impaired waters. In our work-

with style, we called the DEP as well as the regulated community (this permit would affect nine municipalities around the Bay: Cape Elizabeth, Cumberland, Falmouth, Freeport, Gorham, Portland, South Portland, Westbrook, Windham, and Yarmouth), before filing the appeal. The appeal has a lot of merit. We are merely asking for the language that was in the final draft to be reinstated. We now are taking this time to see if we can resolve this through the agreement of all parties involved. If that happens, we can withdraw the appeal.

Cathy provided some framing for this effort. Filing an appeal signals to all the involved parties that we are serious about this. We are continuing to have conversations with all the stakeholders and our hope is that we can drop the appeal. This is exactly the work we should be doing. No one else is watchdogging these issues.

Malcolm shared that we all understand why this is confidential but when this issue is resolved, we will have a good story to tell.

Social Media Metrics and Online Events, with Board Discussion *Community Engagement Coordinator Sarah Lyman*

Sarah shared that these metrics tell a different story for how we are building relationships to get our work done. Sarah discussed social media metrics first. She reminded us that the metrics are FY20 numbers (April 2019 through March 2020).

Our website is at the heart of our communications. Sarah shared a graph on website visits for FY20. She showed how visits jump on days that we send very compelling emails that ask people to visit our website and take an action. 36% of all of our online visits are via mobile phones and tablets. We have tried to make our website very mobile-friendly. Most people arrive on our website via direct searches (43%), from links served directly to them in emails we send to them (38%), and via social media (10%). People, on average, spent 1:37 minutes on our website (which is decreasing over time as is peoples' attention span). We created 62 new pages of content on our website in FY20.

Our email open rate is 21%, higher than the 18% benchmark. On average, 1,480 people open each of our emails. We sent 133 emails to varied audiences in FY20.

Our videos are hosted on YouTube. Our average viewer watched our videos for 2:43 minutes. We are therefore trying to keep our videos below three minutes in length.

Sarah is most proud of the sheer amount of content we are creating to share our stories with our audiences. Our communications work is a team effort—everyone is helping us create content. What Sarah is most concerned about is growing our list: the more people on our lists, the more relationships we can build.

Finally, Sarah shared metrics on our online events for this fiscal year. She reminded us that in February, when we developed our Operating Plan, we did not plan to do any online events, but we had to pivot given the pandemic. We are on track to host 11 this calendar year.

Executive Director Update *Cathy Ramsdell*

Cathy thanked Sarah for helping keep our website mobile friendly. We were ahead of the curve on that.

As soon as this board meeting ends, Cathy shared that she is headed to an online meeting of the South Portland City Council as it does a second reading of the fertilizer ordinance we have been advocating for.

Our Staff Writer application deadline ends on Monday at 5 p.m. As of right now, we have 40 applicants.

We have good news to share on the capital campaign. We launched the public phase when we were at 86%. We are now at 96% 52 donors donated the first 86% More than 400 additional donors have given the next 10%. We have about \$66,000 left to raise. The end is in sight!

We will soon be asking you to help us send thank you notes to volunteers, just as we have with donors.

Note on your calendar the next two online events: Visual Storytelling and Casco Bay: A Conversation with Knack Factory, Wednesday, December 2. This will be our last 30th anniversary-branded event. And on December 16 at 8 a.m., we will host an event to connect with our Water Reporter volunteers.

We appreciate how quickly the board pivoted to taking part in our work through online meetings.

We are moving into planning mode for next year's operating plan. We know, this time, that we are dealing with COVID. When we look back over the year, it is remarkable how much work we have been able to continue. Running the Continuous Monitoring Station has been a game changer for us. We hope to have the new stations in the water in April, 2020.

Pat noted our social justice statement. We are continuing to learn about social and environmental justice and felt it was important to update/restate our position.

Final question: Why do you serve on the board of Casco Bay?

Steve: Because Malcolm asked me! Honestly, because Portland and South Portland are a great place to live because of the Bay! It's fundamentally why the tourism, the hotels, the businesses, and restaurants are all here.

Mark: I've always had a special place in my heart for Cathy and have always been impressed with Mike Doan's work. And of course, every morning I wake up and drink my coffee looking out on Portland Harbor. I know I'm lucky to live on this estuary. As population grows, Friends of Casco Bay's importance will grow and I want to be a part of it.

Bud: The surf was magnificent yesterday. I walk the rocky shore and come across the remnants of old pipes from the time of WW2. The pipes were discharge pipes, and they used to think if we put the pipes out far enough it wouldn't hurt the Bay, which we know isn't true. When I see the old pipes, I know how far we have come.

Pat: I care deeply about our mission and all things environmental. It doesn't get more local than Casco Bay!

David: I'm on the board thanks to Malcolm and Jack. I'm passionate about the Bay. If I could figure out a way to be on the water 12 months a year, I would.

Seb: I agree with all that has been said. I'm deeply committed to the environment. My wife and I try to sit on the Bay each evening. We are always so thrilled to be here. It's really important. Being on the Board is a way to make sure it stays this way or better.

Malcolm: On top of loving the environmental movement, I love this organization, the processes we use. It's the people that keep me coming back.

Lori: I've always appreciated the inherent value of the environment. Thinking globally, but acting locally, this is the organization to support.

Jack: I grew up in South Freeport back when it was cloudy, stinky and dirty. It's time to improve the Bay for future generations. If we don't do something, who else would? I wake up on the water and go to bed near the water. I'm very privileged.

Sandy: I'm on the board because Jack asked me. The organization is consistent with my own values. Thank you!

5:20 – 5:30 Questions, clarifications, concerns, comments