

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

Monday, February 1, 2021, 5-6:00 PM
Via Zoom

Board: Seb Milardo (Committee Chair), Sandy Marsters, Bud Higgins, Pat Ianni, David Kaufman,
Malcolm Poole, Joan Samuleson, Lori Thayer, Jack Thomas
Staff: Cathy Ramsdell, Will Everitt, Sarah Lyman, Sara Biron

Summary:

- The organization’s branding guide is a helpful document that allows all of us to have consistency in the ways we talk about our work. Having our branding, messaging, and style guidance all in one place strengthens our work. This will be a valuable tool for our new Staff Writer.
- Staff Writer interviews are moving along well, and we look forward to bringing someone aboard in the next month or so.
- Thanks to the ideas and focal points suggested by this committee, we will be planning two separate online events to celebrate our successful Climate Change and Casco Bay Fund campaign and the launch of the two additional Continuous Monitoring Stations.
 1. In April, we plan to host a small online event (or a series of small online events) to celebrate crossing the finish line of the campaign, with a behind the scenes look at the launches of the new Continuous Monitoring Stations. The target audience will be the largest contributors to the Climate Change and Casco Bay Fund. We will limit the number of attendees so we can use this as a way to connect and thank them.
 2. In June, we plan to host a large online Casco Bay Matters style event where we celebrate the new stations and share the data from all three stations with our entire audience.

Sharing our appreciation for all of our Climate Change and Casco Bay Fund donors, our “regular” donors, and community partners, will be integral to both events.

Update on Staff Writer search and possible timeline

Cathy and Will reviewed the applications of 80 people and narrowed the pool to 6 who were invited to hour-long first interviews. Two tasks, a writing sample and an editing job, were part of this interview process. Three applicants were then invited to second interviews, one of which was held last week. In the second interviews, applicants are meeting with Cathy and Will for an hour-long exchange before the rest of the staff joins the Zoom meeting. The all staff-portion is about 45 minutes long as staff ask questions of the candidate and vice-versa. Once all three second interviews are complete, Will and Cathy will meet a finalist in person, outside while remaining socially distanced and masked, in order to have a final interview and extend an offer, if it seems right.

The search was conducted as Seb and others advised: by distributing a job description that included skill requirements, yet excluded the character and personality traits we hope to find. This allowed the interview process to be a way of assessing the fit of applicants. We are looking for a person who will come aboard bringing new energy and a new edge to what we are doing.

Friends of Casco Bay’s Branding Guide (please keep document confidential)

This document puts in one place the cultural and stylistic ways we represent the organization, including our preferred word choices. While this is a large document, covering many granular pieces of our communications and design work, it is succinct for the number of topics and specifics it covers. This is a

living document that we will continue to evolve and add to over time. Many elements of this document existed as separate pieces until recently. We wanted to bring them together so our cultural knowledge on these topics is all in one place before the Staff Writer joins the team. Staff ask that the document not be shared outside of our organization. Even though much of the language in the document is shared publicly elsewhere, with the additional rationale this document contains, it feels proprietary.

Feedback is welcome and can be shared with Cathy or Will. Board Members were excited to see this document, noting it is essential to any organization to create consistency across the organization. It sets up who we are and what we do, our branding and values. It, in full or part, would be a great addition to the board notebook. The strength of this is that it is a living document that guides us all to speak through the same lens about the work. Overall it left a positive, optimistic, and hopeful feeling. It is a great complement to the annual Operating Plan, and similarly is a document that Staff will go back to repeatedly. It can be used to guide decisions around word use and design.

One suggestion was to pivot the language about staff longevity to be positive instead of negative saying, "Staff longevity is incredibly high." The committee had a great discussion about the choice to use "common decency," a somewhat old-timey phrase that does describe how we work.

A committee member asked if this document could constrain a new Staff Writer. Staff did not think so. It provides guidelines to allow them to adopt our organizational voice with ease. This document will be shared with new staff early in the onboarding process.

Our plan to celebrate having crossed the finish line on the Climate Change and Casco Bay Fund

Thank you to all who helped sprint us across the finish line to reach our goal with the Fund! Board Members came up with a lot of ideas at the December Community Engagement Committee meeting for how to celebrate the completion of the fund and, more importantly, the resulting work.

Proposed timeline:

- In April: three Continuous Monitoring Stations in the water -- thanks to the Fund!
- Early-mid April online celebration with top tier of donors (similar to board celebration in January)
 - Hold 2-4 of these online events
 - Share a video of gratitude at this event with behind the scenes of the stations getting prepared and launched
 - Thank you email to 4 sets of audiences: top tier of donors, other fund donors, donors who did not support the campaign, nondonors
- Mid to late June: Casco Bay Matters as large celebration of what the Fund is doing and look at first sets of data from the stations
 - Mike to share the data and gratitude
 - Ivy to share how we use the data in our advocacy and say thank you

Both the April event and June event will have the aim of reaching out to a bunch of people at once. The April event will be smaller, with a select set of donors. The June event will be designed for our entire list of supporters and Bay lovers to be the audience.

Board ideas and feedback:

- June event:
 - consider holding it around the solstice, time and tide wait for no one.

- Board Members shared hope that we can hold small in-person events outside in the summer, including using Board Member boats, waiting until April will allow us to have more information about the pandemic. Even if we limited it to just those who gave \$1,000 or more, the invitee list would be 85 households.
- We could encourage donors to simultaneously, but separately, participate in a ceremony, while remaining socially distant by choosing their own location. We could suggest a way to mark the occasion.

Regarding the pandemic and in-person events, Board Members shared that we, as an organization, have to be somewhat risk tolerant, allowing for self-selection by potential attendees. We have to determine when to get people together. The organization thrives when we get people together. At the same time, with all the uncertainty, it would be difficult to plan and organize something, as in-person events require so much lead time. We do not want to have to cancel an event. [Additionally, people are being vaccinated at very different times and it is important to note Staff will be some of the last to be vaccinated because of age and because they we conduct much of our work from home.] Online events have the bonus of not needing to be canceled due to weather.

We will also seek media coverage of the expansion of our Continuous Monitoring Stations, including considering pitching a Maine Voices interview with Cathy around the time of the event.

Discuss how to “warm up” online events

Board pointed to our “Celebrating Water” event with Gary Lawless as an example to emulate, as it was warm and personal. The Knack Factory behind the scenes video about making the film was also great. These events have just two to three faces on screen at a time and that is engaging. Consider additional one-on-one interviews with an artist whose work is based on the Bay or an endearing author with a recent Casco Bay related book. Eric Hopkins and Meredith Hall were suggested. Or authors who have books on climate change. Providing a Behind the scenes look is great, too.

Water Reporter - reflections on the December event and subsequent activities

Each online event shows Staff’s quick maturity and development of online events, with events getting better each time. Water Reporters were very interested, chatting and asking questions during the December get together. It had an easy flow. Clearly, these volunteers are committed. It was a great reflection of volunteer effort. Sarah was really empathetic and is a great manager of volunteers. Cathy is encouraging staff to take ownership of their area of work. This is true with both Sarah and Mike, becoming great ambassadors and owning something with the community. There has been a lot of growth with staff in this environment and an increase in leadership inside the organization.

Water Reporter will be a topic at the February Board meeting. Please share any questions you’d like answered about the effort with Sarah (slyman@cascobay.org).

Update on ideas generated by this committee: Premise of Climate Change and Casco Bay Fund celebration/Casco Bay Matters event (proposed for June 2021)

We set a goal of sharing at each of these meetings outcomes of ideas generated by this committee. The premise of the June celebration was generated by the CEC. We are celebrating the expansion of our Continuous Monitoring Stations enabled by the Climate Change and Casco Bay Fund, especially focusing on the data and work, rather than merely celebrating having reached a specific dollar amount.