

**Friends of Casco Bay
Minutes - Board Meeting
Online via Zoom
Tuesday, February 16, 2021, 5:30 pm**

Board: Sandy Marsters (Board President), Steve Bushey, Mark Green, Pat Ianni, David Kaufman, Seb Milardo, Tollef Olson, Malcolm Poole, Joanie Samuelson, Ann Thayer, Jack Thomas

Staff: Sara Biron, Mike Doan, Ivy Frignoca, Sarah Lyman, Cathy Ramsdell, Sara Freshley (UME Law School Extern)

Invited Guest: Lindsay Heald

Welcome: *Sandy Marsters, President*

Sandy opened the meeting at 5:30 pm and asked Tollef to share a Minute for the Bay. Tollef shared a photograph he took on Commercial Street recently of a Merlin who had captured a pigeon.

Sandy asked that we each think of an adjective that best defines FOCB. He will ask us to share those descriptors at the end of the meeting.

Introductions with guests Lindsay Heald (potential Board nominee) and Sara Freshley (UME Legal Extern):

Cathy introduced Lindsay Heald, a potential Board nominee, who asked to attend and observe a Board meeting to learn more about the Board members and the process. Lindsay is a Senior Video Producer at Knack Factory, a Portland, Maine based video production firm. A short bio was included in the Board meeting documents. Lindsay has been a “Friend” of Friends for some time, and Staff got to know her during the recent production by Knack Factory of the film to celebrate our 30th anniversary. Each board and staff member introduced themselves to Lindsay.

Ivy introduced Sara Freshley to the Board. She is a law student at UME School of Law working as an Extern for Friends where she receives school credit in lieu of pay. Sara is working with Ivy on various legislative initiatives.

Board Consent Package: *Action Item*

Motion by Jack (seconded by David) to accept the minutes and financials provided in the board consent agenda packet as presented: PASSED.

Community Engagement Committee – *Seb Milardo, Committee Chair*

Seb summarized the February 1st CEC meeting discussion which included:

- An update on the status of the Staff Writer position;
- A discussion of the internal “Branding Document,” which Seb described as serving several purposes including: outlining our “values” statement, a guide for staff in their work and communications, a template to ensure consistency in operations and communications, discussion of the use of certain words and even the spelling and form of abbreviations, and an overall guide for marketing and branding.
- A discussion of ideas regarding ways we can celebrate the successful completion of our Climate Change Fund, with staff leaning toward two planned events. (a) Mid- to late-April: once the two, new, additional continuous monitoring stations are deployed, we will host an online meeting (or series of meetings) with top donors to thank them and bring them up to date on our monitoring work, the result of the fundraising. This may be a series of meetings depending on the number of donors we include. The goal is to make these “warm & personal.” (b) Late June: we will hold an

event to give thanks and celebrate the accomplishment of completing the campaign by sharing and comparing data from all 3 Continuous Monitoring Stations. While we would like this to be an “in person” event, depending on the status of the pandemic, it will likely be online.

- A debriefing by Sarah Lyman of our December Water Reporter event where participants expressed the things they liked and the questions they had, and all expressed that this was a positive experience.

The Value of Our Water Reporters – Sarah Lyman, Community Engagement Coordinator

Sarah referred board members to the Water Reporter publication called “*Use Case Spotlights 2020*” (a link to which was included in our board packet), highlighting case studies of 12 organizations using Water Reporter to further their missions; Friends of Casco Bay is showcased as Case Study 3.

Sarah noted the interesting evolution of our Water Reporter work as seen by a comparison between our 2018 and our current 2021 Operating Plans, where the former cited the Water Reporter initiative as a “pilot effort,” and the current Op Plan describes it as a “Program” used to supplement our water quality work on identifying how Casco Bay is changing.

Our Water Reporter Program provides our “Friends” with an active way to support our work by describing their observations. These volunteer observers (aka “citizen scientists”) upload photos of their observations which they categorize via 7 different hashtags, known by the acronym “W-A-T-E-R-S” (which stands for Wildlife, Algal Blooms, Trash, Erosion or Eel Grass, Report Pollution, & Sea Level Rise). Some volunteers post frequently, others once a year.

Why we use Water Reporter: (1) to learn how Casco Bay is changing with respect to climate change and encourage our community to understand these changes on a deeper level; and (2) to provide an opportunity to more people to be involved with our work and inspire our community to become advocates for the Bay.

Sarah cited examples of how Water Reporter is having an impact on furthering our mission. For one, Water Reporter has provided Friends with opportunities to engage with our public. Certain posts have led us to converse with landowners about reducing fertilizer use near areas where algal blooms have been observed. Some of these Water Reporter observations have resulted in Maine DEP listing areas near algal blooms on their “Nonpoint Source Priority List,” which allows these areas to receive more regulatory attention. Other posted reports have included photos of construction debris entering a waterway observed along a pier where proper containment structures had not been installed; this post resulted in action by the US Coast Guard to properly mitigate the situation. The data we receive from Water Reporters are helpful in that they come to us in a uniform way such that we can map it, tabulate it, and compare data over time from various locations. Many Water Reporter volunteers adopt a favorite location to which they return periodically; consequently, they are able to observe and report changes over time, many of which we would not otherwise detect. These volunteers take ownership of their location along the bay.

Sarah noted that during the recent Water Reporter webinar session she offered the following tips for posting: (1) take the photo on your camera app before you start using Water Reporter; (2) then upload to Water Reporter, and if a significant amount of time (hours or days) has lapsed by the time you post to Water Reporter, note the time and date of the actual photo observation.

Questions/Comments from Board and Staff:

- Tollef asked whether we incorporate any of the data from Bigelow Labs into our Water Reporter data. Ivy responded that she would be speaking to Bigelow and Susie Arnold about this soon. Ivy also noted that she plans to meet with our Water Reporters more often this year because they are an important Observation Team and we want to continue to build collaborations with our Volunteers.

- David suggested that we attempt to keep our Water Reporters engaged with our work. Sarah noted that she sends a monthly email to the Water Reporters celebrating a particular post.
- Malcom asked what Sarah thinks Water Reporter will look like in 3 years. Sarah stated that she was not as interested in an increase in the numbers of participants as in the impact the observations have on our work and how this program is encouraging the community to care about our work and deepen their understanding of the issues we are facing. Ivy noted that she hopes to integrate the Water Reporters' work into Baykeeping and build our citizen stewards in a different way by using them to help us observe and advocate for appropriate changes.
- Seb asked if we should perhaps title the Water Reporter Program using a more motivating name to better capture the purpose – such as “Eyes on the Bay?”
- Joanie asked if locations where we previously used volunteer water samplers were included in our Water Reporter locations. Sarah said not currently, but many of those locations are still being sampled by Mike during our regular sample collection program. Joanie also asked if we knew whether and how many of our former volunteer water samplers are now Water Reporters? Sarah will look at those data.

Baykeeper Update – Ivy Frignoca, Casco Baykeeper

Ivy provided updates on three areas of work:

(1) Ivy noted that we had filed an appeal with the Maine Board of Environmental Protection (BEP) voicing our objection to key terms omitted from the final MS4 General Permit. In response, two groups, Interlocal Stormwater Working Group (ISWG) and Southern Maine Stormwater Working Group (SMSWG) (representing municipal interests) recently filed a request to admit Supplemental Evidence consisting of a series of emails requesting that these key terms not be included in the MS4 General Permit. Consequently, Friends filed an Objection to the admission of the Supplemental Evidence (dated 2/8/2021). We are awaiting a ruling on this issue from BEP. If they decide not to include the key terms, we can consider filing an appeal in court.

(2) Legislative Work: Our work involves reviewing and testifying in support of, or against, certain bills before the Maine Legislature. To maintain our non-lobbyist position, each paid staff person from Friends must maintain a cap of 8 hours per month or less dedicated to lobbying efforts. Ivy noted that since the new legal extern, Sara Freshley, is not being paid but is receiving credit in exchange for her work, we are able to accomplish more legislative work while maintaining our non-lobbying status. Among the many bills being introduced this first session of the 130th Legislature, we are anxiously awaiting the Governor's bills effectuating the goals of the Climate Action Plan. These are likely to include an Omnibus Energy Bill, and a Sea Level Rise Projection bill which will require all Title 38 (land use) bills to consider sea level risk projections in their drafting. Ivy noted she would also like to see other climate change indicators considered in the passage of new laws. Ivy will also be following closely any proposed bills on flares, eelgrass mapping, etc. In response to a question, Ivy confirmed that we still work closely with (and rely on) the bill tracking done by the Environmental Priorities Coalition (EPC).

(3) Upcoming Casco Bay Matters Event (March 3, zoom webinar, noon): Ivy noted that Peter Slovinsky, a Marine Geologist at Maine Geological Survey, will be participating in our Casco Bay Matters event. The presentation will focus on sea level rise projections, the increased frequency of 100-year storms, and the need to update Maine's laws with current scientific data and projections to make our laws more nimble as the climate changes. Ivy noted that Dr. Cassandra Rose (Senior Science Analyst and Climate Council Coordinator with the Governor's Office of Policy Innovation and the Future) will also be on the call. The participant limit is set at 500.

Next Board Meeting: Ivy will discuss our Nitrogen criteria work.

Executive Director Update -*Executive Director Cathy Ramsdell*

Cathy updated the board on various administrative endeavors:

- (1) We are in the final stages of hiring the Staff Writer. We will have a meet and greet with the finalist Wednesday and hope to make an offer, and pending receipt of the candidate's acceptance, Cathy will invite the person to our March Board meeting. Cathy noted a surprising turn in the hiring search when their view of candidates shifted as a result of the second interviews. She noted that all staff were on the same page. The selected candidate is a good writer and will bring a new level of excitement and a high quality of engagement.
- (2) Staff have been having conversations on "how to" talk about our data and "how not to" talk about our data, and "facts" vs "speculation," use of terminology, and how we collect data. These conversations continue.
- (3) Assessment of Office Technology – Our server is nearing its end of life, and Cathy and staff are considering whether to replace it, use the cloud for data storage (which is very expensive), or adopt a hybrid solution. Cathy will use a placeholder number in the Operating Plan budget. Staff is planning to conduct an e-file re-organization during this time of transition, to clean up their library of historical documents and new docs.
- (4) Review of Operating Plan – Staff have been writing their sections, illustrating how very integrated our work is – it is "phenomenal and unusual."
- (5) March 8 (Monday) we will hold our annual Operating Plan and Budget Workshop virtually via Zoom, with the meeting opening at 5:15 pm and beginning at 5:30 pm. We will spend 1.5 hours walking through the draft plan and the budget that will support it. Typically, we also hold a "financial workshop" along with the Op Plan/Budget Workshop, but we will forego it this year (to limit our zoom meeting time); we may decide to do a financial workshop in the spring or at a future board meeting.
- (6) Cathy noted how FOCB has made significant pivots over the years in how we do our work. Cathy noted that she continued to work with Glenn Page and the New England Ocean Cluster as they worked on their Bioregional Integrated Work Project, and she noted the similarities in how their approach to incorporating new ideas into their work is inspirational for our work.
- (7) We are preparing for the shift from using one Continuous Monitoring Station to three. Cathy noted that as we end the fiscal year and launch a new one, we are in a very solid place financially. She stated that the board input is invaluable, especially ideas generated during the monthly CEC meetings.

Q&A for Cathy:

- New Office Space and Real Estate Status – Jeff Fetterer (Office Manager) is looking at a property on Rte 1 in Falmouth and he and Cathy are keeping their eyes on the real estate market.
- IT Vendor (Malcolm Poole asked) – FOCB used Roundtable Technology for the cloud/server assessment. The cost to migrate to the cloud is high ("shocking"), thus, Staff is considering a new server and staying with Systems Engineering.
- PPP Loan (second round) (Mark Green asked) – Cathy said they had applied but heard no response yet.
- Finances at the end of the year (Seb asked) – Cathy indicated things looked better this month than in January, with an unexpected \$30,000 donation that came in later than usual. In order to qualify for PPP2 loan, we needed demonstrate a loss in the 4th quarter. From 2019 to 2020, we saw a 36% decrease in operating income in the 4th Quarter. We hope to recruit as new regular donors those who joined us in our recent Climate Campaign. We may close the year projecting a small operating deficit, and the end of this fiscal year is not looking as dire as it did earlier. The PPP funding will be critical in helping us fund next year's budget, and Cathy is looking at this as a 2-year process. Jack Thomas concurred with Cathy's conclusions on the financial status.

Questions, clarifications, concerns, comments (“Adjectives”): Sandy asked board and staff to offer one adjective that best defines FOCB. Some offered were as follows: Homogenous, Collaborative, Motivated, Dynamic, Encompassing, Fluid, Warmness/Caring, Influential, Capable, Engaging, Dedicated, Passionate, Invigorated, Welcoming, Positive, Tenacious, Generous, Gregarious, Grounded, Friendly.

Meeting Adjournment – *Sandy Marsters, President*

Sandy closed with a reminder for all to register for the March 3rd (noon) Casco Bay Matters virtual event!