

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

Monday, April 5, 5-6 pm, via Zoom

In attendance

Board: Seb Milardo (Committee Chair), Steve Bushey, Bud Higgins, Pat Ianni, David Kaufman, Ann Thayer, Lori Thayer

Staff: Cathy Ramsdell, Will Everitt, Sarah Lyman, Sara Biron, Robby Lewis-Nash

*Internet connection was disrupted around 5:30 pm for many attendees at this meeting.

1. Environmental justice, diversity, equity, and inclusion; plans for moving forward

The Executive Committee encouraged the Board President to form a committee that will plan a workshop about environmental justice, diversity, equity, and inclusion for our board and staff. The workshop is intended to help us develop a collective understanding of environmental justice concepts as we consider how they may be incorporated into our work at *Friends*. We anticipate the workshop will be held in the Fall and may include hiring an outside facilitator. Sandy has asked Seb, Pat, Cathy, Sarah, and Will to serve on the workshop planning committee.

2. Upcoming Events

Donor thank-you events

To mark the achievement of reaching our fundraising goal for the Climate Change and Casco Bay Fund, we will be hosting two events to thank donors who contributed \$1,000 or more, to be held on April 12 at noon and April 13 at 5 p.m. Per the recommendations of this committee, these events will focus on how this funding supports our data collection and community engagement, rather than just celebrating the money we raised. The program will include words of gratitude from Cathy with framing why this fund is critical to our future operations, comments from Sandy, and a video montage of the launch of our new Harpswell station (prepared by Will and Robby). Attendees will have the opportunity to share their thoughts and ask questions. Both events will have the same format, and the hope is that the option to attend one of two events will enable more donors to attend (approximately 80 households have been invited).

Water Reporter events

On April 14 at 5:30 p.m. we will host an event for Water Reporters to review ways to participate in the program. Topics will include suggested locations, the types of content we're looking for in posts, and questions from the attendee Water Reporters.

On May 6 at noon, we will host another event for Water Reporters: *Do I report this? When to report sheens, colors, or foams*. This event will be hosted by Ivy and two outside experts, Willie Whitmore from NOAA, and Bryant Lewis from the Maine Department of Marine Resources. Together, they will present an overview on how to delineate between harmful and benign observed phenomena on the Bay. This event will be recorded and posted to our website. Seb noted that boaters and other community members who do not participate in the Water Reporter program may be interested in this event. Sarah reflected that this content may be useful for recruiting new people to join Water Reporter.

3. Water Reporter program language

Sarah Lyman raised that we plan to refresh the language we use to describe the Water Reporter program. The name "Water Reporter" itself does not do a great job of conveying principles such as community stewardship or monitoring the health of the Bay that we want associated with this program. However, as the Water Reporter program is run through the Water Reporter app, Sarah emphasized that it is valuable to have the program name match the name of the app for the sake of clarity for participants and others. Sarah asked if the committee has ideas to refresh the language we use to describe the Water Reporter program.

David expressed it should be clear that Water Reporter is a way to volunteer and support environmental health while recreating on and around the waters we love. In this way, volunteers become the eyes and ears of Friends of Casco Bay. He also suggested sharing and celebrating the Water Reporter work in real-time could inspire new people to join the program. Seb thought that a strength of the program we should convey is its user flexibility: some Reporters participate regularly, while others contribute sporadically when they happen to observe something worth posting about. Robby emphasized that programs like Water Reporter offer a tangible and important way for anyone to engage in the work of combating climate change, which can often feel out of reach due to the global nature of the crisis. Lori asked if we could change the name of the program, and Sarah raised the importance of having the program name match the name of the app. She noted that coming up with a subheading or slogan to go along with the Water Reporter name, instead of a name change, could be a great way to go. Pat asked how many Citizen Stewards from our previous water quality monitoring program are Water Reporters, and asked how some of the ambassadorial and stewardship culture that the Citizen Steward Water Quality program instilled in participants can be emulated by Water Reporters. In particular, the Citizen Steward program required regular participation at a specific location along the Bay, conveying the sense that these volunteers were integral to *Friends'* water quality monitoring work. Specific technical training helped infuse this. Sarah responded that 16 of our 250 Water Reporters were previous Citizen Stewards. Bud suggested that board members and staff have impactful Water Reporter images on their phones to share with those we are connected with as a tool for program recruitment. Images of harmful phenomena on the Bay that Water Reporters can recognize (following inspiration from the sheens, colors and foams event) could be helpful. David suggested making Water Reporter decals for boats to encourage dialogue about the program among boaters, followed by Seb's suggestion to leave pamphlets or posters about the program at marinas. Sarah noted this project could dovetail with the messaging we are developing for boaters this year.

Water reporter language suggested at meeting: ambassador, sentries, citizen/community steward.

4. How to share with the (larger) community the news of the launching of the 3 Continuous Monitoring Stations

Seb expressed his enthusiasm for our work and the launch of the new stations, along with his belief that the broader public would be equally thrilled if they had the chance to learn about all that we do at *Friends*. This prompted the question, how can we boost awareness of our work, especially of our Continuous Monitoring Stations, within the greater public, reaching beyond our members to both those along the coast and inland? Bud wondered if there were other organizations in the region that have run successful outreach campaigns that we could emulate. David shared that beyond pushing more press releases to local news outlets, forming a partnership under contract with a media organization for a year or more would increase our coverage. Steve pointed out that there have been past unfortunate events, such as the *Julie N* spill, that brought attention to our work. He also suggested that besides the papers, pitching stories to sporting journals may offer other opportunities for coverage. Bud added that the Island Institute's Working Waterfront is another publication to consider, and floated the possibility of partnering with a local paper to publish a monthly column written by our Staff Writer.