

**Friends of Casco Bay  
Community Engagement Committee  
Minutes  
Monday, April 4, 5-6:00 p.m., via Zoom**

**In attendance**

Board: Seb Milardo (committee chair), Howard Gray, Pat Ianni, Joan Samuelson

Staff: Susan Bosco, Will Everitt, Robby Lewis-Nash, Sarah Lyman

**The Warming Sea, event debrief – *Pat Ianni***

Pat recently represented Friends of Casco Bay at [The Warming Sea](#), a Maine Science Festival event hosted at UMaine Orono on March 19. The event focused on the issue of climate change through the lens of a symphony composed by the Director of the Maine Symphony, Lucas Richman. Pat tabled at the event with our former Executive Director, Cathy Ramsdell. Pat said they did not see much traffic at the table, but that the event overall was a great success. Cathy was also a speaker at the event and was a strong representative for our work at *Friends*.

**Clean Water Act 50th Anniversary Celebration and Friends of Casco Bay Members  
Annual Meeting – *Will Everitt***

Will said that this summer we will host a major celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Clean Water Act alongside our Annual Meeting. We are planning the event for Wednesday, July 20. We have not decided on a specific location, but want to host it in Freeport or another central location along the Bay as a nod to our members who live in the eastern part of the Bay and to signal that we are not a Portland-centric group. In the past, our Annual Meeting celebrations have focused on our science work, but this year Ivy will speak, focusing on the Clean Water Act and how it can help us protect the Bay and fight climate change. Will asked the board for ideas to help encourage people to attend and make it appealing to folks who do not know us but may be interested in our work (we aim to make our Annual Meeting celebrations accessible to both our members and people who are new to our work).

Howard asked Will for more details about the event. Will said that we could make the event whatever we want it to be. Staff and board usually welcome the guests. We offer food and drink, and the event usually lasts two hours. In addition to the celebrations, this event serves as our official Annual Meeting, though this portion is short and lasts approximately 15 minutes. The board president will lead a vote to officially elect new board members to our board of directors. Everyone is welcome at the event, and we encourage members to bring their families and friends.

Seb said that the location, food, and drink are important. Seb suggested having live music, perhaps a folk singer or another artist who could perform while guests arrive.

Joanie suggested that we ask Maine Beer Company or Mast Landing to sponsor the event. She also thinks we should show our data and monitoring equipment. We could invite someone from the Muskie family to attend, or other Maine politicians like the Governor or our senators and representatives.

Pat asked Will how we usually publicize the event. Will said we add it to community calendars (like those maintained by Maine Public Radio and the Portland Phoenix), and that we send out invitations. Pat suggested writing an editorial for a local paper about the Clean Water Act that includes a promotion for the event.

Howard asked for clarification as to why we invite non-members to our Annual Meeting. Will said our Annual Meeting is a free event where we talk about the Bay and our work. The event is intended to be open and accommodating such that someone who does not know about Friends of Casco Bay could be included. Howard said that when he thinks of an Annual Meeting for an organization he thinks of an exclusive group of members, so perhaps we should downplay the emphasis on the Annual Meeting aspect of the event. Staff intend to do this. Internally, we refer to this event as the Annual Meeting, but publicly we will talk about it as our Clean Water Act 50th Anniversary Celebration.

### **Nabbing Nitrogen event – *Seb Milardo***

Seb said our Nabbing Nitrogen event is planned for Saturday, August 6. [Please note: as a result of the discussion at this meeting, staff moved the event to Sunday, August 7.] We hosted a similar event in 2016 where we got people to spread out around Portland Harbor and simultaneously collect water samples for nitrogen analysis. Participants then brought their samples back to a few central locations where we provided them with food and drink. We had just under 100 volunteers participate in 2016, and this year we are aiming for 200 volunteers. Unlike in 2016, this event will include volunteers collecting samples on the islands closest to Portland Harbor. Will added that part of the appeal for this event lies in the idea that by participating, a volunteer can make a generational difference for Casco Bay by simply sticking their hand in the water and collecting a sample. That is because the data from this event will be used to help develop nitrogen criteria for Portland Harbor. Seb and Will asked the board for ideas to get the word out about the event and promote turnout. We want volunteers to sign-up in advance of the event and will start promoting it in May.

Howard asked how we plan to educate the public about nitrogen pollution; people need to understand the importance of the issue if they are going to volunteer. Will said that we have a lot

of media work planned ahead of the event that will focus on nitrogen pollution from different angles. We are planning a press conference at the end of May that will promote our boater communications and the relaunch of our Pumpout Program. When the MS4 permit goes into effect in June, we will do another media push concerning the permit and our stormwater advocacy. Both of these issues relate to nitrogen pollution, and we will name the Nitrogen Nab as a way to take action. Sarah added that last time we hosted the event, it seemed that many volunteers only came to understand the significance of nitrogen pollution following the event, but that they participated anyway.

Pat commented that Beach to Beacon is also scheduled for the morning of August 6, causing logistical challenges. Will and Sarah replied that there are reasons we chose this date, but that it is not yet set in stone. Staff reconsidered the event date.

Joanie said there should be a play on “all hands on deck,” like “all hands in the water,” as a promotional slogan for the event. Seb said he would put a sign-up poster up on Little Diamond Island, and that Bud would likely do the same on Peaks.

Pat commented that in 2016 many participants were familiar with how to properly collect a water sample because of our Citizen Stewards Program. Pat asked how we can ensure volunteers know how to properly collect samples. Will and Sarah said that many 2016 participants had never collected a sample before and we provided specific instructions to complete the collection correctly. This is among the logistical issues that staff are revisiting.

Will asked if the board could think of any strategies to get boaters excited about participating. Seb and Pat suggested contacting local kayak businesses and marinas. Joanie said we should also think about involving the paddleboard population. We had paddleboarders sign up in 2016 as well.

### **Newsletter, Annual Fund, and Special Appeal to residents along the Presumpscot River –** *Will Everitt*

Will said our spring newsletter will be sent out in early May. Our Annual Fund and Special Appeal will arrive in member’s mailboxes a few weeks after. The letters will ask folks to support our work and be tailored to specific audiences. For our Special Appeal Acquisition letter, we’ll be reaching out to residents along the Presumpscot River who do not currently support our work. That letter will include a unique message concerning our river advocacy and the monitoring we will do in the river this summer. We will send a similarly unique and tailored message to people who live near our Continuous Monitoring Stations in Harpswell, Yarmouth, and Portland.

Howard commented that a recent article in the Sun Journal described the lengthy history of upgrading the Androscoggin River. The way we describe our efforts to upgrade the Presumpscot will require some nuance.

Seb adjourned the meeting at 6:07 p.m.