

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

In attendance

Board: Seb Milardo (committee chair), Howard Gray, Bud Higgins, Pat Ianni, David Kaufman, Malcolm Poole, Joan Samuelson, Lori Thayer

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

Ways board members can help Friends of Casco Bay this summer – Seb Milardo

Seb asked for board members to help recruit three people to Nab Nitrogen on Sunday, August 7 at 9:30 a.m. How can the staff help board members recruit friends, family, and neighbors? The board asked a number of questions about the event, which staff answered.

- *How many volunteers we recruited for the last Nitrogen Nab?*
Will said we had about 100 volunteers, and that did not include any boaters because of the rain that day. Will added that we need volunteers to register in advance of the event to adequately plan and distribute materials.
- *Are assigned locations for boats?*
Will said that boater scan locate themselves anywhere they want around Portland Harbor.
- *Is there a limit on the number of volunteers and how close they can sample?*
Staff clarified that volunteers could sample as close as three yards apart. Bud said he will start a campaign to get people involved on Peaks Island. Seb said he will do the same on Little Diamond Island. Will and Seb agreed that a simple poster to help promote the event would be useful for this purpose.
- *Are there other islands we want volunteers to sample from?*
Sarah said we are only focusing on Little Diamond, Peaks, and Cushing because of their proximity to the harbor. Seb added that it would be helpful to have point people on Willard Beach, near the port area, and elsewhere. Pat said it would be helpful to share event details with the board so they can tell friends and others about it.
- David suggested reaching out to marinas and yacht clubs to promote volunteer participation, where board members could each take on a few businesses/clubs to contact.
- Bud said that communicating about and promoting the event may need to look different depending on what neighborhoods or groups of people we are talking to.
- Pat suggested promoting the Nab among other groups we are involved with, or groups like Girlscouts or Boyscouts that our families are involved with.

Seb also asked for board members to help increase turnout at our Clean Water Act 50th Anniversary Celebration and Members Annual Meeting on Wednesday, July 20. Seb asked that

board members bring a friend or a neighbor, and asked how he and staff can support them in doing that.

- Will commented that the venue is great. There is a beautiful barn for indoor space and a large lawn. We will have drinks, snacks, and music. In addition to our members, we want new folks at this event too. The event program will include announcing three Casco Bay Awards to people around the Bay who have made Clean Water Act related accomplishments:
 - Scott Firmin, for reducing nitrogen discharges at the East End Wastewater Treatment Facility;
 - Fred Dillon, for reducing stormwater pollution in South Portland;
 - Dan Devereau, for climate change adaptation relative to clam flat and mussel bed management in Brunswick.
- Joanie raised the concern that because the venue is in New Gloucester it may be a bit further than people are interested in traveling. Will thinks it shakes out about the same. Pat agreed. David said people will drive 30 minutes for an ice cream cone, so driving to this event should not be an issue.
- Lori suggested reaching out to the people who organize the Portland to Peaks swim event, thinking that anyone swimming in the harbor would care about nitrogen pollution there. Pat suggested promoting the event with Beach to Beacon folks, and Joanie said there is a chance we could table at the race's expo event. Joanie also suggested getting a booth at the Yarmouth Clam Festival to promote the event.

Exploring a survey of our members and supporters – *Will Everitt*

Will presented that staff are considering conducting a survey of our membership to help us learn more about them and why they support our work. The goal of the survey would be to provide a meaningful way for our members to provide feedback on our work *and* the importance of what they see as the biggest issues facing the Bay. The survey could help inform how we talk about our work and provide us with information about what a part of the community thinks about issues facing the Bay.

Below are some categories of issues and ideas that we could ask membership about, brainstormed by staff:

- Connection to the Bay
- Issue(s) of most concern
- Climate change
- Why they support Friends of Casco Bay
- How they want to stay in contact with Friends of Casco Bay
- How they want to be involved
- Ideas on how we could/should be doing our work

Will said asking about these topics could provide useful data. We do not give members opportunities to give well-rounded feedback on all of our work. This information could also be helpful as we go into strategic planning, helping us to understand the perspectives of our members.

Malcolm said he thinks these are great topics. However, surveys require the capacity to do the analysis afterwards. He said the topic about issues of most concern is good and caught his eye. He would like us to include a question about what members value most about our work. He also suggested breaking “climate change” down into smaller subjects, like sea level rise or warming water.

Bud raised a concern that with an open ended survey we will not be able to control the volume of responses. He suggested waiting on the survey until we have a strategic plan, and then using that plan to help us identify areas of our work where we want feedback. Bud said we could also get a lot of negative comments and that it takes time to follow up on those.

Pat wondered if there is a large portion of our members who are dedicated to our work and would jump at the chance to be more involved. We should include a question about how members would like to be more involved in our work.

Howard commented that this survey seems much larger in sample size than the survey we sent to Water Reporters. He asked us to think about what is the best way to ask the membership about their thoughts. He suggested that it may not be a survey format, and we could think about this more like a research project.

David said that it is good to engage membership. It would be good to send out a survey now and then do it again after we have a strategic plan to fill in gaps like Bud suggested. Will thought the same thing. There is a lot of information we do not know about our members. Will also thinks it would be good to draft a survey and have board members take it first so we could make any necessary updates. Lori suggested having a paper survey to hand out at the annual meeting.

Howard said we should figure out what the objective of the survey is. Bud agreed. Seb said that the purpose of the survey is to find out what the membership thinks.

Joanie thought we have a lot to celebrate this year: the Clean Water Act, our new Executive Director, and more. She said that issuing a survey before Will has had a chance to be at the helm for a year would not be advisable. Lori shared that the survey is a way for Will to get to know the membership.

Robby responded to the concerns about the time it takes to analyze the survey data. If the survey is more focused on quantitative questions it will be easy for staff to organize and analyze the data with software. The more open ended, qualitative questions we ask will make analysis take more time.

Will said he has heard the board say they are interested in the survey idea but that they need more information and specificity on what it would look like. Will said we do a lot of work telling our membership what matters for the Bay. We spend very little time asking members what *they* think matters to the Bay. Will wants to know more about why our members continue to support us and hopes that information will help us hone our work. He shared that staff will share a more detailed plan at a later meeting.

Seb adjourned the meeting at 6:00 p.m.