

**Friends of Casco Bay
Community Engagement Committee
Minutes
Monday, July 11, 5-6:00 p.m., via Zoom**

In attendance

Board: Seb Milardo (committee chair), Deb Debiegun, Ellen Grant, Megan Hallett, Bud Higgins, Pat Ianni, David Kaufman, Sandy Marsters, Malcolm Poole, Joan Samuelson
Staff: Susan Bosco, Will Everitt, Robby Lewis-Nash

Pumpout Program Update – Will Everitt

Will gave an update on our Pumpout Program. Prior to the pandemic, the program functioned as a service that operated largely separate from our other operations. When we relaunched the Pumpout Program this year, we implemented changes to integrate it into our programming with the goal of helping to bring boaters closer to our work. Pumpout customers now receive emails from us, both about servicing their boat and about the broader work our organization does. We want customers to know that Friends of Casco Bay does so much more than pumpouts, that we are not only a service provider. Chris Gilday is our new Pumpout Coordinator. It has been a very busy season for him. In addition to providing pumpouts, Chris has been contacting customers about our events like Nabbing Nitrogen, asking that they help us collect water samples in the harbor.

Pat asked if Chris has a script he uses to talk to customers about Friends of Casco Bay and our work. Will replied that it is rare for a customer to be on their boat when Chris is servicing it. Chris does not have a script, but he is a gregarious person and great at talking about our work. He has a background in commercial fishing and truck driving, and has a natural working waterfront approach to talking about the importance of clean water. Will gave an example of this, describing a time that Chris talked with some fishermen who usually discharge their sewage three miles off the coast (where it is legal to do so). They responded well to Chris' suggestion that they may be better off saving fuel and paying a small price for a pumpout, which is also good for water quality.

Ellen asked how customers can sign up for a pumout. Customers can sign up for pumpouts on our website. Will also said that sometimes Chris will get flagged down by a boater while he is working. Chris has an iPad with cellular connection for these moments, so he can hand them the registration form while he pumps out their boat.

Our plan to survey members – Will Everitt

Will reviewed our plan to survey our membership. Friends of Casco Bay is a membership organization. It is our membership that gives us standing in Clean Water Act cases (such as the

MS4 revision and hearing process), backs up our advocacy at the local level and in Augusta, and helps us make connections in the broader community. However, we rarely ask our members what they think about our work, outside of one-on-one meetings with donors. Conducting a survey is a way for us to engage our membership and understand how they are connected to the Bay, the issues they care about most, and hear their feedback. This will help us understand what it is about our work and approach that makes some of the roughly 6,000 people on our email list support us. We also hope to gain insight into areas of our work that need improved education and communication, and perhaps issues that we need to educate ourselves about internally. Will added that the survey will be filled out anonymously, but that we can send the survey to different groups via email and analyze their results separately. For example, we could send the survey separately to donors and non-donors and compare their responses.

Megan asked if we will share the survey results with members, adding that if we are going to ask them for their opinion, we should reciprocate by sharing what we learned from them and demonstrate how we are responding to their thoughts. Will said we would share what we learned. He added that if there is negative feedback that we should want to know about it; criticism is where some of the most fruitful conversations come from.

Bud said the survey is a good idea. He sees three major reasons to conduct the survey: to connect with members, hear their feedback, and learn new information about them. Bud agreed with Megan's idea that we should share some version of the survey results with everyone who participates. He also said we should be prepared for criticism.

Sandy agreed with Bud; the membership's perspective is important. It could be useful for Robby to write a summary of the survey to share with members. Joanie thinks the survey is a good tool, but that we have to be wary of redundancy. Joanie added that we all have to do a better job of ensuring we do not have deceased members in our database. She has seen that we still have people who have passed on our lists.

Pat suggested adding a survey question asking if members are concerned about issues up the watershed, or if the Bay itself is their primary focus. Will said that suggestions like these are helpful, adding that he would love to hear if the board thinks of any questions that would be helpful for the strategic planning process. Will will ask board members to answer a draft version of the survey and provide feedback before we send it to members.

Ellen noted that the question about environmental justice, diversity, equity, and inclusion (EJDEI) is broad. She asked about the thought process behind adding it. Robby said that staff wanted to know more about what our membership thinks and understands about EJDEI concepts and how they may apply to our work. He said that any suggestions for how to present or hone the question would be appreciated.

Seb said the questions we have are good. He thinks we are missing questions about how we do our work. Does the membership think there are ways we could improve the way we do what we do? Feedback on how we communicate or advocate would be helpful. For example: Do you like how often we send emails?; Do you support our collaboration before confrontation approach in our advocacy? Questions like these may help us change how we work, as opposed to learning if we share the same priorities as our members. Pat said we should add a question about how we present our data, and if we could improve those communications. Will liked the idea, and shared that we grapple with this issue a lot. We often ask ourselves how we can create stories that are written at an appropriate reading level and use language that is accessible to a general audience, while also keeping our stories sufficiently accurate such that they resonate with the scientific and legal experts in our community who receive our communications.

Engaging in our events this summer – Will Everitt

Will updated board members on our events this summer, reminding them to join us and help invite others to participate.

- July 20: [We Are Water: 50th Anniversary of the Clean Water Act Celebration and Members Annual Meeting](#)
- August 7: [Nabbing Nitrogen](#)
 - Will encouraged all board members to help sign up volunteers for the Nab. We have 70 signed up so far. We would like to have well over 100, and up to 200 volunteers.
 - Megan asked if she can use the Hallett Canvas and Sail website to promote the Nab. Will and Robby will follow up with Megan about language to use. There are other board members and Friends of the Bay who are doing a similar kind of promotion.
 - Joanie suggested reaching out to science teachers to see if their students would want to participate. Also reaching out to youth summer programs that may be able to participate.
- 8/11 House Party: CANCELED. The LaBauves are selling their house so it is no longer available to host a party.

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