

Friends of Casco Bay
Board Meeting – Minutes
Hybrid Meeting: In-person at GMRI and Online via Zoom
Tuesday, September 20, 2022, 5:30 p.m.

In Attendance

Board: Sandy Marsters (President), Deb Debiegun, Ellen Grant, Howard Gray, Megan Hallett, Bud Higgins, Pat Ianni, David Kaufman, Seb Milardo, Malcolm Poole, Joanie Samuelson
Staff: Mike Doan, Will Everitt, Ivy Frignoca, Heather Kenyon, Robby Lewis-Nash

Welcome – President Sandy Marsters

Sandy welcomed everyone to our first hybrid (in-person and online) board meeting. He welcomed our newest board member, Ellen Grant, and newest staff member, Heather Kenyon. Sandy also thanked board members for their various commitments and contributions to *Friends'* activities throughout the summer recess, including Pat and Deb for helping organize cleanups and Bud for his role in helping to organize Phoenix Chorale's benefit play. The play showed three nights on Peaks Island, raised nearly \$6,000 for Friends of Casco Bay, and may have boosted our name recognition.

Megan gave a Minute for the Bay, sharing that she recently “accidentally” bought a lobster boat. She picked it up in coastal New York, where the water was notably full of trash. Pulling into the Gulf of Maine she felt much gratitude for how clean and colorful the water is.

Financials Update – Treasurer Malcolm Poole

Malcolm noted that our income looks good. Our balance sheet shows a 19:1 cash to liability ratio, which is exceptionally good. Our fixed assets are under \$300k, and we have \$2,369,000 in cash.

Action Item: Board Consent Agenda (including Mark Green's leave of absence)

Seb motioned, Malcolm seconded, to approve the consent agenda as presented. All in favor. *PASSED*.

Malcolm questioned why Mark would be excluded from board emails during his leave of absence. Will clarified that it was Mark's request. He and Sandy will do a thorough debrief of board activities with Mark in January.

Baykeeping Update Q&A – Casco Baykeeper Ivy Frignoca

Sandy congratulated Ivy on being named a Clean Water Champion by the Natural Resources Council of Maine.

Ivy introduced Heather Kenyon, our new Science and Advocacy Associate. Having Heather on our staff has increased our capacity and is already helping to bring our science and advocacy closer together. Before being hired for this position, Heather worked as an intern with us in 2020 after her first year of law school. She has a background in education, science and technology, and now law. In law school, she was the editor of the Coastal and Ocean Law Journal, a prestigious honor and a clear indication of her familiarity with our area of work.

Heather thanked everyone for creating the Science and Advocacy Associate position – it is her dream job. She already feels at home here and plans to be with *Friends* for a long time. While in law school, Heather read many cases where courts and government agencies were grappling with how to apply science and data to policy. She thinks the creation of this position is timely and strategic. Ivy added that we will suspend our law extern program while we are onboarding Heather, and that we will reconsider the program overall when Heather is more up to speed.

Ivy provided an overview of our Baykeeping work over the summer. We participated in a Waterkeeper Alliance grant where we received two PFAS water testing kits from a company called Cyclopure. We used these tests in the Presumpscot River as the pilot project was in freshwater. Our samples were collected above and below the two major dischargers in the lower river: the Sappi paper mill and the Westbrook wastewater treatment facility. Preliminary results show there is PFAS present in the downriver sample. Friends of Merrymeeting Bay conducted similar tests this summer and we will be working with them to consider if we should broaden our PFAS testing. Ivy confirmed there is some alarm about the presence of PFAS, but cautioned that we do not yet have enough information to make an informed assessment. Pat noted that there are over 1,200 PFAS chemicals and shared that these chemicals are barely regulated and continue to pollute the environment. There is a proposal to add them to the federal hazardous substances list, which would make it easier to hold polluters accountable.

Ivy updated the board on our water quality monitoring in the lower Presumpscot River. The main issue we are focused on is if dissolved oxygen levels in the river are high enough to upgrade the river's water quality classification from C to B. Our data this summer show that there is a strong relationship between the flow rate of the river, and water temperature and dissolved oxygen. This dynamic is substantially influenced by the many dams along the river that control flow. Overall, we can also see that climate change is a major factor, where drought conditions and high temperatures are impacting the river. We will have all of our data from the season soon, and will be meeting with the Portland Water District, Sappi, and the Maine Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to collectively review and compare the data we all collected.

Ivy noted that when the Clean Water Act classifications and Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) licenses were first written, climate change and new weather patterns were not considered. Additionally, the water quality benchmarks that define the classification system and permits were determined long ago when scientists were using far less sophisticated equipment that collected less data.

Ivy clarified that we do not yet know if our data will show the river is ready to be upgraded, but what we have seen so far is troubling. In addition to data from our sonde in the lower river, data on from the Presumpscot River is coming from the Portland Water District, which is stress testing its system during upgrades to its aeration basins; Sappi, which is required to test under its FERC licenses; DEP, which stationed a data sonde in the river above the Sappi mill and wastewater plant this summer.

Bud asked if we are seeing a paradigm shift in water quality permits, regulations, standards, etc. Ivy said that climate change and updates in technology have made it clear that our past standards are inadequate. The goal of water quality standards is to support aquatic life, and to keep waters drinkable, fishable, and swimmable. We need to update our standards to recognize new science and changing conditions. David

asked about Sappi's attitude in working with us. Ivy said Sappi is collaborating. We made it clear that we are not being adversarial, we do not see evidence that they are violating their licenses, and want to work together to share data so we can better understand the health of the river. We also smoothed over animosity caused by a complaint that Friends of the Presumpscot River filed against Sappi with DEP. Ivy looked at the complaint and helped Friends of the Presumpscot see that Sappi had not actually caused a violation. Since then Sappi has openly shared their data. Pat asked if PFAS will play a role in water quality classifications. Ivy was not sure.

Ivy briefly covered nitrogen pollution, saying that the Nitrogen Nab and the nitrogen transects she and Mike conducted are providing data that will aid our work with a DEP stakeholder group that is developing nitrogen discharge criteria for the state.

Ivy reviewed summer conditions on the Bay. The water was notably warm. There were few storms, and few nuisance algal blooms. A clam mortality event in eastern Casco Bay seems related to low dissolved oxygen levels and high temperatures. There was a huge increase in green crab activity this summer – a partner organization studying crabs was catching at least 1000 crabs every day with only two small traps. Eelgrass populations are struggling. There was also less snowmelt in the spring, impacting many aspects of water chemistry. Climate change is the common thread behind all of it. Joanie added that she has not seen any eelgrass where she is accustomed to finding it near her homes in Freeport and Cliff Island.

Executive Director Update Q&A – Executive Director Will Everitt

Will shared his gratitude for having an excellent board and staff to work with. This summer was full of reconnecting with people; members, donors, volunteers, partners, and more. A few major events included our Annual Meeting, Nabbing Nitrogen, meeting with the Coast Guard, and convening the Maine Ocean Climate Collaborative. We also saw important wins for the Bay this summer, including Maine's MS4 permit going into effect and the Portland City Council amending the city's pesticide ordinance to include limits on fertilizer use. The policy is very similar to what we worked on in South Portland.

Staff are moving Environmental Justice, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (EJDEI) work forward. Will, Sarah, and Robby are on a small team of staff that are reviewing our operating plan relative to our EJDEI goals. We may plan some staff trainings in the future. Will included the Casco Bay Estuary Partnership's EJDEI statement in the board packet. It is a good model partly because it lays out what they will do, and our organization should work on updating our statement. Ivy and Howard also hold seats on the Partnership's Executive Committee, and in that respect we helped to approve the statement.

We will start our search for a new Community Engagement Coordinator later this fall. In the meantime, Heather is leading our Water Reporter efforts. At its core, the Coordinator position is about bringing people and organizations closer to us. The Coordinator should also help us build community support for Baykeeping priorities; if we want to make big changes like addressing the climate crisis, collaborating behind closed doors will not be enough and we will need broad public support.

Yearend giving is about to begin. Sarah has been great as our new Development Director. We are working on our newsletter, annual fund, and annual report. Members first receive the newsletter, then the annual fund membership letter, and then the Annual Report. Each of these mailings have similar

messages and help to bring about half of our giving in just three months. Will thanked all board members in advance for helping to pen thank you notes on our annual fund letters.

Will shared his excitement for our member survey, included in the board packet. He will share it with the board for feedback ahead of sending it to membership. Will clarified that if any board members have feedback now, they can give it directly to him. Will reminded everyone to mark their calendars for our Casco Bay Matters event on October 25, 5:30-6:30 p.m.

Bud commented that the annual fund should include a recognition of the financially challenging times we are in. Will said we have already been including a message of this sort in our renewal letters, telling people that we understand these are extraordinary times and that it is okay if they cannot afford to give. Will also noted that even though past performance is not a guarantee of future results, we had similar concerns about the 2008 financial crisis. If you look back at that year's giving, it is hard to tell it apart from other years. Bud and Malcolm commented that the most important thing we can do to maintain giving is keep doing good work. Megan commented that the pandemic has also changed people's priorities. Many folks now keep the things that matter most front of mind, like the environment and places we live.

Howard asked why there are not any board members working on the EJDEI committee with staff. Will said that EJDEI will be a part of the strategic planning process. The board also needs to decide how it will conduct its business. The board currently has an Executive Committee and a Community Engagement Committee, which is where EJDEI work has lived. The board can decide how it wants to organize and the approaches it will take.

Community Engagement Committee & Cinematic Celebration Update – Seb Milardo

Seb announced that Community Engagement Committee meetings will be on hold during the strategic planning process. We will try holding some of the Committee's work during board meetings. A draft of the membership survey was included in the board package. The objective of the survey is to find out what members think about our work and what we should be doing. Usually, we decide the direction of our work without knowing what members think. This is an opportunity to ask them. Seb asked the board for feedback on the draft survey.

Bud asked for more clarity about what the survey is for. Will said we want feedback on how we are doing. We have long told our membership what the greatest threats to the health of the Bay are. But we rarely ask them for input even though we are a membership organization. The survey will give us feedback on our work: how we work, how we talk about it, and any other thoughts. This information will certainly be helpful from an operational standpoint as it will help us improve our communications and let us know what is working, what is not, and what is important to our members. We may also find it helpful for growing our membership and informing our strategic plan.

Ellen asked if we have membership demographic information. Will said we have broad demographic information based on where people live. Ellen commented that she recently completed the Natural Resources Council of Maine's member survey for the first time, despite having received it for years. She

did it now because she is retired and has the time. Ellen suggested we may have similar demographic responses in our survey, and questioned if that is what we want.

Will clarified that we plan to send the survey out in groups: to donors, non-donors, and volunteers, for example, which can help us further analyze results. This survey is about our current supporters. We did a similar survey of just our Water Reporters and got some helpful information. David commented that there is no downside to engaging our current supporters. Will added that Seb and Paul Gregory (a past board member), who have both done a lot of survey work, have been providing feedback on the project.

Seb reminded the board that the return of our film festival, rebranded as a Cinematic Celebration for Casco Bay, will be held on November 12. We need raffle items and board members have helped with that in the past by soliciting local businesses for donations or offering to bring raffle winners for boat rides. The raffle is not a big money maker, but people love the raffle. Board members were handed letters to ask businesses for raffle donations, and Sarah Lyman previously shared the same document with them via email.

Exploring a potential partnership to increase awareness about Friends of Casco Bay – David Kaufman and Executive Director Will Everitt

Three years ago David asked WMTW (where he was once CEO) if the station would be interested in a media partnership with Friends of Casco Bay. This would mean running spots (advertisements) for our organization. Usually, partnerships like these are funded by corporate sponsors. We decided against sponsorship, and considered funding the \$25-50k ourselves, but ultimately did not pursue the project.

David said we could consider this again now. When a channel like WMTW works with an organization like ours, they embrace them. Their news department works with our staff to cover our stories. Their creative services department will work with staff to create content, such as ads about our work, that will run during regular times. This would add up to be hundreds of spots and 24 -28 news stories a year. It would be a great way to build awareness about Friends of Casco Bay in southern Maine. It would also help forge relationships with other media, like radio and print.

If we are interested, David would first approach WMTW. If they are not interested, perhaps due to timing or other commitments, he would ask the other TV stations. If accepted, the station would solicit corporate sponsors, which we could choose from. When asked why a station would want to do this, David clarified that they want to partner with organizations doing good work and that they have Federal Communications Commission requirements to do public interest programming.

While there was some interest in having David pursue this, many board members had questions and concerns. Some board members noted corporate sponsorship is risky. It was suggested that we could buy the spots ourselves. Others noted that if we were to spend the money on ads we should further refine what a major public relations campaign should look like.

David clarified that there is no rush on pursuing a media partnership. Given the concerns of such a partnership and the time constraints in this meeting, we can further refine this concept at a future date.

Strategic Planning Committee Update – *President Sandy Marsters*

Sandy summarized that the strategic planning process is a great experience and that everyone involved will get much closer to the organization. Malcolm asked that everyone look at the questions we will address before each session. We are not reinventing the wheel, but we want to hear all new ideas.

Sandy noted that the hybrid meeting format worked very well.

Adjournment – Sandy adjourned the meeting at 7:32 p.m.