

Friends of Casco Bay
Board Meeting – Minutes
Hybrid Meeting: In-person at GMRI and Online via Zoom
Tuesday, November 15, 2022, 5:30 p.m.

In Attendance

Board: Sandy Marsters (President), Stephen Bushey, Deb Debiegun, Ellen Grant, Howard Gray, Bud Higgins, Pat Ianni, Seb Milardo, Kirsten Piacentini, Malcolm Poole

Staff: Mike Doan, Will Everitt, Ivy Frignoca, Heather Kenyon, Robby Lewis-Nash, Sarah Lyman

Welcome – President Sandy Marsters

Sandy reminded everyone that there is not a board meeting in December. There is a strategic planning meeting on November 29.

Strategic Planning Update – Malcolm Poole

Malcolm asked everyone to review the questions we brainstormed in our first strategic planning session and to identify which ones resonate with us the most. He also asked everyone to review the first draft of our Vision, Purpose, and Values statement that Will and Sandy wrote based on our discussions from the second session. Most of our work in the upcoming third session will focus on further data collection and initial prioritization. Malcolm hopes to send a survey before January that will help us begin prioritizing our ideas.

Action Item: Board Consent Agenda

Bud moved, Steve seconded, to accept the consent agenda as presented: *PASSED*

Environmental Justice, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (EJDEI) Committee, update and official creation – President Sandy Marsters

Sandy reviewed our EJDEI discussion from the last board meeting and how it resulted in the formation of an EJDEI committee. Sandy, Pat, Howard, Will, Ivy, and Robby volunteered to serve on the committee. Sandy reiterated that anyone who would like to join the committee should do so and would be welcomed. Sandy opened a discussion of the committee's draft purpose statement.

Ellen asked if there is a set timeline for the committee's work. Sandy and Will answered that it is difficult to foresee how long the committee's work will last, but that there are clear goals with deadlines, such as informing the creation of the FY24 operating plan and our strategic plan in the spring. Ellen asked if there was discussion of prioritizing EJDEI initiatives in the operating plan. Pat clarified that the work of the committee is at a higher level, whereas prioritizing specific goals in the operating plan will be carried out by staff. This committee will be a good place to assess if staff are effectively prioritizing and implementing EJDEI work. Will added that the committee will inform EJDEI work at the board level.

Pat asked how the operations of this committee will differ from the Community Engagement Committee. Will said the Community Engagement Committee provides feedback for staff on communications, development, and volunteer work. In contrast, the EJDEI committee will help implement EJDEI priorities

and concepts at the board level and advise staff on EJDEI work. There was a wide ranging discussion on the formation on the committee.

Action Item: vote on creation and purpose of the EJDEI Committee

Seb motioned, Malcolm seconded, to create the EJDEI Committee and accept the purpose statement as drafted: *PASSED*.

The group noted that all board committees can change their drafted purpose at any time by bringing a new draft statement to the Board.

Debrief of our recent events: Listening to Casco Bay (online event, 10/25) and Cinematic Celebration for Casco Bay (11/12)

Kirsten asked about the financial success of the Cinematic Celebration. Will said we will not know the precise numbers until December, but that we are on track to surpass our goal of raising \$20k. Sandy thought the event went smoothly and that the films were great. Will said that the biggest change is that the event did not sell out like past years, but we anticipated that the pandemic would change that. Pat commented that we had great volunteers and she had some wonderful conversations with them. Ellen commended the staff for how well run the event was. Ellen wants to ask the staff in the future if they think the event was worth the effort it takes to run it, knowing that special events can take a lot of time and resources to pull off.

Executive Director Update and Q&A – Executive Director Will Everitt

Will emphasized that November, December, and January make or break our budget. We are currently on track to meet our budget. We received some grants this month and that will be reflected in the next board package. Our invested funds have taken a hit due to the state of the economy, and we expect that will balance out when the economy eventually bounces back.

Will and Ivy met with Seth Garrison, the new general manager of the Portland Water District. They are one of our closest partners around the Bay and it was great to meet Seth.

Will, Sandy, and Kirsten will be meeting soon about restarting Community Engagement Committee meetings sometime in 2023. The committee will likely restart its work with reviewing the results of the member survey.

Seb asked if there are any updates about our search for new office space. Will said our realtor is sending us weekly proposals. Jeff reviews those proposals and if any of them meet our needs we will look at it.

Update, Strengths and Challenges in Our Science Program and Q&A – Staff Scientist Mike Doan

Mike's update focused on our Continuous Monitoring Stations. The strength of our data collection is that we prioritize quality assurance. That makes our data meet the highest standards. This year has been a challenge because supply chain issues have impacted our ability to get necessary parts and repairs for our monitoring equipment, which impacts our monitoring program's redundancy. We have multiple pieces of all our equipment (sondes, sensors, etc.) which allow us to maintain our stations in good condition and replace parts as necessary. This year, that quantity of redundant equipment is lower due to these issues.

Specifically, our biggest challenge in our continuous monitoring program is our partial pressure carbon dioxide sensor. There are three different companies that make the components necessary for the sensor. For some of our loggers, the part of the sensor that collects the data, stopped communicating with our laptops. Getting them fixed has been challenging. Half of our loggers are out for repairs. To make matters more complicated, the company that makes the logger has stopped producing it. They will continue to maintain the ones they have sold, but they will not sell new ones. It is a matter of time before they stop servicing them. Annual calibration maintenance of the sensors used to take about five weeks. This year, that calibration process takes multiple months and the calibration is not as precise as it has been in the past.

Mike said we are also working with other organizations, University of New Hampshire (UNH) specifically, to improve our calibration. Comparing our sensor to their laboratory equipment has allowed us to check our confidence in our equipment, which seems to be slipping this year. These carbon dioxide sensors have helped us meet our goal of tracking ocean acidification over time. However, we have new opportunities on the horizon to share our data with regulators, which will require more precise equipment.

Mike said that supply chain issues have also affected our sondes, but that he sees that issue resolving. Sensors we need for our sondes should start arriving soon.

Bud expressed serious concern and said we cannot allow this issue to go unanswered. The quality of our data has built our organization's reputation. Seb asked about the comparison of our data and equipment with that used by UNH; why is their equipment so much better? Mike said that larger, benchtop equipment in the lab is always going to be more accurate than equipment that is deployed in the field. The comparison is about checking the quality of our data and equipment. Seb asked if we think the data we collect on other parameters is of good quality. Mike said that it is.

Will assured that we are working on the technology, quality assurance, and sensor issues with our partners. Ivy will cover more about this work in her update below. This is key work that our advocacy and the Bay depend on.

Baykeeping Update: Ocean Climate Collaborative and Q&A – Casco Baykeeper Ivy Frignoca

Ivy reviewed the phenomenon of ocean acidification, which occurs when carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is absorbed by the ocean. This leads to a chemical reaction that makes the ocean more acidic. In coastal areas, acidification can also be caused by algal blooms, which can increase in magnitude and quantity due to factors like nitrogen pollution. When algal blooms die off they produce carbon dioxide. This means that ocean acidification is often most severe and complex in the nearshore environment.

In 2014, Maine was the second state in the nation after Oregon to set up an ocean acidification study commission. We supported and were involved in Maine's commission. It was a legislative study commission, meaning the legislature authorized the commission to provide a report and recommendations on ocean acidification. Among the top recommendations of the commission was to gather more data in the nearshore environment, which coincided with Mike beginning our continuous monitoring efforts.

Today, Mike's monitoring protocol is being used by other scientists in Maine to monitor acidification effectively and affordably. Another recommendation was to create a commission to oversee this work and recommend policies. However, the LePage administration did not support a government-led commission. Ivy (who at the time worked at the Conservation Law Foundation) and Cathy Ramsdell (our previous Executive Director) worked together to meet this need and convene a volunteer network, which became the Maine Ocean and Coastal Acidification (MOCA) Partnership. This group was highly successful, and among other achievements, informed the recommendations of the Maine Climate Council and Maine's climate action plan.

Last summer, Mike and Ivy came up with the idea to convene a group of scientists and researchers that work on coastal monitoring to standardize quality control and troubleshoot monitoring efforts together. This group began meeting this year and is called the Maine Ocean Climate Collaborative. At an upcoming meeting, the group will be discussing the issue that Mike presented in his update: how to approach changes in technology as products are discontinued and data requirements change. Ivy and Mike want to come back to the board with a request for new continuous monitoring equipment when they know the outcomes of these discussions. Howard asked if anyone has looked into federal agencies' positions on these monitoring issues. He thinks there may be opportunities to get financial support from federal agencies. Ivy said the group has asked NOAA to include funding opportunities for groups like this one.

Bud said this effort epitomizes his hope that we would seek synergistic collaboration with other organizations. It seems like a great idea and perhaps there are funding sources to seek out. Ivy noted we do continue to work collaboratively. Howard emphasized that our reputation is built on our data, and that if the quality of our data drops, our reputation will be directly impacted. Seb said he thinks it would be helpful to review what the collaborative discusses about equipment solutions at the next board meeting.

Ivy mentioned the rivers network we are working with. Ivy said it is similar to the EJDEI committee, in that it is in its infancy and nebulous in nature. The group is scheduled to make some key decisions about how it will work moving forward, and Ivy will update us.

Final Q&A

Will said Chris is working on our boats, which are out of the water. Chris will be learning to put our custom canvas wrap on the Baykeeper boat. There will be some glass work on the boat by Portland Yacht Services this winter. Will added that having Chris do boat maintenance this summer was great. The boat ran smoother than it has in recent years.

Steve wonders if there are people in Maine who could fix and develop the sensors that we need to do our science work. In five to ten years, Portland will be a hub for the life sciences. Ellen said that the Roux Institute is looking for projects, and that it could be a great idea to work with them on development sensors and equipment.

Adjournment – Sandy adjourned the meeting at 7:33 p.m.