

**Friends of Casco Bay
Board Meeting – Minutes
Hybrid Meeting: In-person at GMRI and Online via Zoom
Tuesday, January 17, 2023, 5:30 p.m.**

In Attendance

Board: Sandy Marsters (President), Stephen Bushey, Howard Gray, Pat Ianni, David Kaufman, Peter LeBourdais, Seb Milardo, Kirsten Piacentini, Joan Samuelson
Staff: Will Everitt, Ivy Frignoca, Sarah Lyman

Welcome – *President Sandy Marsters*

Board members and staff shared the various ways they plan to support Friends' work this year.

Action Item– Acceptance of Consent Agenda

Pat moved, Seb seconded, to accept the consent agenda as presented: *PASSED*

Discussion about Problems and Solutions to our Monitoring Technology Challenges – *Executive Director Will Everitt and Casco Baykeeper Ivy Frignoca*

As you heard at the November Board meeting, we and other organizations that collect water quality data, have been having logistical issues with getting probes our sondes, the devices that collect and store data on multiple parameters. There are also issues with the device that measures carbon dioxide in the water, the partial pressure CO₂ logger (pCO₂). The latter is a long term problem that we need to find a solution for. The company that makes the pCO₂ logger has stopped producing it. They state that they will continue to maintain the ones they have sold, but it seems they will not do so efficiently. Some of our pCO₂ loggers are not communicating with our laptops and the company has been unable to fix them for months. Our Continuous Monitoring Station swaps have become inefficient because we are waiting for our redundant equipment to be repaired.

The good news is we applied for and received a \$200,000 grant in partnership with University of New Hampshire and Wells Reserve to tackle the technical problems we and other groups have been having collecting ocean acidification data. This grant was offered by an anonymous funder whose focus is implementation of *Maine Won't Wait*, the state's climate action plan, and supporting collaborative work that supports habitat for wild species. Will's leadership and writing on the grant were key to us receiving the funding.

This partnership makes up the Maine Ocean Climate Collaborative's (MOCC) Tech Team and their planned pilot work. MOCC is a public/private partnership of scientists, from New Hampshire to Canada, working to advance Maine's understanding of how ocean acidification and related changes affect Maine's coastal habitats. It is a collaboration of water quality organizations of all sizes working together to select equipment and improve the data through quality assurance. MOCC builds upon the legacy of the Maine Ocean and Coastal Acidification Partnership and implements the monitoring recommendation, Strategy E, of Maine's Climate Action Plan: Enhance Monitoring and Data Collection to Guide Decisions.

Our coordination role in this work and its coastwide implications acknowledge our leadership and elevate

our visibility. We identified a problem that extends beyond us and are leading the work to find a solution. The work completed with this funding will not only improve our data collection for Casco Bay, but will also be used as a model along the nearshore Maine coast.

The grant will cover about \$20,000 of Friends of Casco Bay staff time a year for 2 years, about \$40,000 total. The rest of the funding will go towards supporting the other groups and direct expenses, such as equipment. Over two years we will evaluate equipment, implementing the best solution once it is known, while maintaining our current equipment until the updated equipment plan is ready.

In March, you will see that the breadth of the Baykeeping and Science sections of the FY24 Operating Plan are right-sized in other areas to allow for this work. Having additional capacity with Heather on staff will also allow for room to complete this work.

Board Members suggested reaching out to local universities to see if they have the knowledge and technology to help solve these technical issues. That has been discussed by Maine Ocean Climate Collaborative.

Baykeeping Update: Legislative Priorities & MS4 – *Casco Baykeeper Ivy Frignoca*

Overview of Maine's legislative process: the legislature has two sessions. This makes this year the current session a first session, with many new legislators and over 2,100 bill titles submitted for consideration. Over time, the legislature will review those bills, which will be streamlined and consolidated to those that will be voted on. Only bills introduced now can be voted on during the current or second session (or those deemed emergency bills by the legislative council).

We work on legislation in two paths: through the Environmental Priorities Coalition and outside of that process. In either case, our engagement level can range from a simple letter of testimony to robust involvement including helping shape the bill language and encouraging our supporters to speak up on the issue. This year, we are limiting our legislative priorities to encourage the state, including the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), to implement the strong laws that are already in place.

Our four priorities for the 131st Maine Legislature:

Three Environmental Priorities Coalition bills: (1) A bill relating to offshore wind: we want to require the state to choose projects that are environmentally sound and bring power to Maine to offset our carbon-heavy energy use; (2) The third attempt for tribal sovereignty in the state, and; (3) A bill creating a uniform decision-making framework for state agencies to ensure that underrepresented voices are heard and EJDEI is considered. (4) The final priority bill for Friends of Casco Bay is on environmental and natural resources management. It aims to encourage all agencies to work more closely on habitat connectivity. While in a very early form, it is a great concept. We will be helping with its development.

Ivy shared an MS4 update. After consulting with the Executive Committee last week, we have appealed the Department of Environmental Protection's approval of model Low Impact Development (LID) ordinances for 13 towns in the Casco Bay watershed.

The LID ordinance requirement was a vital part of our Clean Water Act MS4 stormwater victory, which we celebrated last year. Unfortunately, DEP approved draft ordinances for these towns that did not establish “clear, specific, and measurable performance standards.” That is, there are no clear standards to ensure or assess whether the ordinances will actually reduce stormwater pollution. DEP admitted in writing that the draft ordinances do not meet this regulatory standard but approved them anyway.

In order to protect the Bay from stormwater pollution (the largest source of pollution into the Bay by volume) we had to appeal this decision. Appealing this to the Board of Environmental Protection ensures that we have a path moving forward to remedy this problem. There may be creative and collaborative ways to work with DEP to fix the problem and the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) may require DEP to agree to fixes.

Will will share our appeal and a letter from EPA that backs up our position.

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

Five updates:

- 1.) Our calendar year end fundraising was strong and solid. December was our highest income month since 2020, when we were raising funds for the Climate Change and Casco Bay Fund in addition to our operating support. Our foundation and government support has exceeded budget with a full quarter left in the fiscal year.
- 2.) While our office search continues, Southern Maine Community College president Joe Cassidy has let us know that the college can extend our stay to June 2024, and can talk about renewing, if needed. While this decreases our immediate need to move, our office space is no longer a good fit for our needs and we need to continue looking. This means we can take the time needed to find the right fit for our needs. Will asked, “Do we want an office space that is large enough for all board and staff to meet?” Board Members said it would be nice, but cost and meeting other needs comes first.
- 3.) Community Organizer and Volunteer Coordinator position: We have at least 88 applicants, many more than our last few searches. We aim to implement best recommended hiring and onboarding practices for DEI. Ivy and Will are holding first round interviews. The hope is that the hire will be in place by April 1, but we are prioritizing hiring the right person.
- 4.) Operating Plan: a new fiscal year begins on April 1, and rolls the budget back to zero. The staff is collaborating to create an operating plan for the upcoming year (April 2023 - March 2024, also known as FY24) and a budget based on that plan. Staff are cognizant we are in the middle of the strategic plan process as well. We will leave flexibility in the budget and operating plan to tackle things that come out of the strategic plan process.
- 5.) Will will be on vacation April 7-23 overseas in Greece with his family.

Strategic Plan Update and Staff Internal Analysis: Our next session is on Tuesday, January 24. We will still be collecting data. We expect to transition to assessing and making sense of the data at the following meeting. This week you will receive a very quick survey to identify your top five “big” questions for us to focus on. Please complete it promptly.

Will previously shared the Staff's internal analysis for the strategic plan process. Some key takeaways:

We are in solid financial shape. Our Science and Advocacy work are strengthened by being intertwined with each other and connected with community engagement. With a full time Community staff person joining the program team, this will be reinforced. Larger advocacy issues will need more community support.

Our staff will be the largest it has ever been with this additional hire. We have great leadership on staff and will have five staff members with less than three years on staff, making us a very different staff than just two years ago. Staff's current thinking is that we would maintain our staff size over the next 5 years. This will allow us to learn how to best work together as a team and to leverage our relationships, partners, to create the best possible outcomes for the Bay. Our thinking is flexible on this and will be shaped by the strategic plan. If we do grow program staff, we will also have to consider growing fundraising staff. We are committed to a holistic view of the mission, including the perspective that the cleaner rivers and streams are, the cleaner Casco Bay is. We will continue our advocacy and collaborations on the Presumpscot, but do not expect to collect data ourselves in the near future.

Board comments included:

We may need to explore assumptions in the internal analysis and identify what we are making comparisons to. One example is in the assumed strength of our finances and fundraising. In answering, Will noted that our fundraising strategies, such as having a capital campaign (like the Climate Change and Casco Bay Fund) every 5-10 years helps us grow our financial support – from \$200,000 5-6 years ago to \$450,000 now – and our number of members. Follow up questions for another time included: Do we have a plan B when it comes to fundraising? What current assumptions may not be effective in the future?

Are we hiring interns? While we expect to in the future, in FY24 we will not hire an intern because we will be onboarding the community engagement staff member who is key in onboarding interns.

Any board members with additional questions about the internal assessment are encouraged to reachout to Will directly.

Environmental Justice, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee update – President Sandy Marsters

The committee has met twice with meetings allowing the new committee to learn how to work together. They are learning together, working on EJDEI definitions that will reflect practical and operational definitions, and looking at mapped demographic data.

Upcoming Community Engagement Committee Meetings – Vice President Kirsten Piacentini

Kisten is excited to lead us as we meet as a Community Engagement Committee to work together to bring more people closer to our work through supporting the staff. The first meeting will be on Monday, February 13. All following meetings will be the first Monday of the month, 5:30-6:30 p.m., in person at GMRI.

Adjournment – Sandy adjourned the meeting at 7:41 p.m.