

Friends of Casco Bay
Community Engagement Committee – Minutes
Hybrid Meeting: In-person at Friends of Casco Bay offices and Online via Zoom
Monday, June 5, 5:30-6:30 p.m.

In attendance

Board: Kirsten Piacentini (Committee Chair), Ellen Grant, Pat Ianni, Seb Milardo,
Staff: Will Everitt, Sara Freshley, Robby Lewis-Nash, Sarah Lyman

Welcome – Kirsten Piacentini, Committee Chair

Kirsten said there is no community engagement committee meeting in July. Our August meeting will be at L.L.Bean's new headquarters in Freeport, more information to come. Kirsten asked the group the check-in question: what's your favorite rainy day activity.

Water Reporter and community engagement events – Sara Freshley

Will reviewed the community engagement goals of our new strategic plan, including coming up with new and creative ways to engage people in our work, and bringing a more diverse and committed group of volunteers and members into our organization. As we wrote the plan, we were in the process of hiring Sara Freshley. Part of Sara's job is to help mature the Water Reporter program and ensure that we have the volunteer support to run it effectively.

Sara shared a list of the upcoming community engagement events for the summer and fall. Many of these events are focused on Water Reporters, though they are open to everyone. Sara reviewed our Water Reporter event last week. It was at Winslow Park in Freeport, and served as a time to help Water Reporters learn what to be looking for, such as identifying algae, erosion, or the tides. Sara was also struck by how much Water Reporters enjoyed connecting with each other. The event ended at Goodfire Brewing in Freeport where staff offered tech support with the Water Reporter app and everyone continued to mingle. About thirty people attended.

Sara continued to review our upcoming Water Reporter events. A saltmarsh event with Pete Slovinsky. Invasive Species event with Jeremy Miller of Wells Reserve. He's great and engaging, will help Water Reporters identify invasives. Then two stormwater events. One at Pleasantdale Cove in South Portland, another at Mere Point Boat Launch. These are locations with persistent algal blooms and are near stormwater outfalls (likely sources of excess nitrogen). Then guided mindfulness and observation event with a Water Reporter named Davinica. She runs mindfulness in nature business. Then we will finish off the season at Maine Beer Company with a Water Reporter appreciation event.

We also have other community engagement events like coastal cleanups, our annual meeting, Film Fest, etc. The last event Sara is planning for the year is with Friends of the Presumpscot, likely at Allagash Brewing.

Kirsten thought it was a nice blend of fun and education at a variety of locations. Ellen asked how many events we have done historically. Will said we have done events like these in the past, and that the pandemic threw that off. Sarah said another change is that we are seeing more people at events now that people are more comfortable being in person again. Will said we started Water Reporter in 2018. Up to this point our big focus has been recruiting Water Reporters. These events are now more about engaging the volunteers we have and maturing the program.

Pat asked about the location of our Annual Meeting. Will people come if the weather isn't good? There were so many people at the Harraseeket Yacht Club when we hosted it there. Will said hosting it there in the winter was much easier to book than in the summer. We also rebooted our Annual Meetings over the pandemic, where now we host them in the summer and changed them a little bit.

Kirsten asked what the options are for Water Reporters who were unable to make it to the event last weekend who want to get better acquainted with the program. Sara said she will have one-on-one meetings with anyone. Ellen asked about when Water Reporters can join. Sara said people can join at any time.

Pat asked if we are hosting any events up the watershed this year. Sara said we decided to not host any this summer or fall for a variety of reasons. Pat shared about attending a recent Alewife walk at Highland Lake, and seeing those fish made her think about how much pollution can make its way through the watershed and into the Bay. Will added that part of the reason we want to wait is to strengthen our relationships with the other river organizations in the watershed.

Inviting folks to our house party and annual meeting – Sarah Lyman

Sarah said these events are a week apart. If anyone has ideas for who to invite please tell Sarah. Our Annual Meeting is open to everyone, it's a great way to be introduced to our organization. We do take care of our official annual meeting business at the event, but we try to keep that part short. The house party is specifically focused on fundraising. People who are invited should have the ability to give significantly. It's also best to invite people in the Cumberland Foreside area because that is where the event is, though people from further away are invited too.

Will said that we can have a nearly limitless number of people at the Annual Meeting. Conversely, we have a limit of about 100 people at the house party. Will clarified that significant donations include people who we can build relationships with that could eventually turn into

someone who donates \$100, \$500, or \$1000 annually. This first event they may only donate \$25, and that's okay. One of our major donors first gave us \$50 at a house party (add many zeroes to that number for her current level of giving).

Seb asked if we are planning to invite current donors from the Cumberland Foreside area. Sarah said attending the house party does not exclude you from attending the annual meeting. We will be inviting people who are current donors to the house party. We are looking to board members and host committee members to build out our invitation list.

Ellen asked for clarification about the house party. Is it a fundraiser or a friendraiser? Will said it is a fundraiser. Will said the invitations are usually pretty clear that it is a fundraising event. Sarah asked board members to share ideas for who should be invited to either of these events with her.

Old Port canvas in July for Film Fest raffle

Kirsten said that when she was at Big Brothers Big Sisters, board members would meet in the Old Port to canvas businesses for raffle donations. Kirsten said it was fun, builds momentum for getting the raffle items, and can make it easier for people who are hesitant about asking. We are going to try this out. It will be a weekday in the late afternoon sometime this summer.

Pat asked if everyone on the board is receiving the information from this meeting. We aren't having any more board meetings this summer. Kirsten said she is going to send around the minutes and associated documents.

Photo contest is live!

Robby said the photo contest is up on the website and we are promoting it via email and social media. So far we have about 12 submissions. Sarah said we don't know what to expect with this contest because we haven't hosted it before. However, we have noticed that people tend to submit things late, they need deadlines. Sarah asked that board members help spread the word about the photo contest.

Kirsten adjourned the meeting at 6:24 p.m.