

**Friends of Casco Bay**  
**Board Meeting – Minutes**  
**Hybrid Meeting: In-person at GMRI and Online via Zoom**  
**Tuesday, September 19, 2023, 5:30 p.m.**

**In Attendance**

Board: Board: Sandy Marsters (President), Steve Bushey, Deb Debiegun (via Zoom), Ellen Grant, Mark Green, David Kaufman, Peter LeBourdais (via Zoom), Pat Ianni, Kirsten Piacentini, Malcolm Poole

Staff: Mike Doan, Will Everitt, Sara Freshley, Heather Kenyon, Sarah Lyman

**Welcome – President Sandy Marsters**

Sandy asked the group the check-in question: *What would you like to see the board accomplish in the coming year?*

Answers included:

- New office
- Reaching people in new ways
- Diversify board
- Supporting ED and Baykeeper
- Formalized process for recruiting new board members
- Expansion of membership
- More people visit the website and more articles published in various media
- Help Mike deal with equipment issues
- Strategic plan, at least 20% of the way there!
- Continue to have meetings with good substance

**Action Item: Acceptance of Consent Agenda**

Malcom moved, Seb seconded, PASSED

**Action Items Nominations to the Board of Directors:**

*Nomination of Anthony Moffa to Board of Directors*

Discussion: Will and Sandy met Athhony in August. Will noted that Anthony has a business degree and spent time looking over Friends of Casco Bay's budget. Sandy summarized his letter of interest.

Pat moved, Seb seconded, PASSED unanimously.

*Nomination of Janna Rearick to Board of Directors*

Discussion: Janna was introduced to Will and Sandy by Kirsten. She is an inhouse attorney at Unum. Sandy summarized her letter of intent. Kirsten added that Janna works for Kirsten's husband and noted that Unum is a generous to the community and a good corporate citizen.

Seb moved, David seconded, PASSED unanimously.

**Action Item: Approval of Ellen Grant as an At-Large member of the Executive Committee**

Ellen has background in governance work and looks forward to helping us develop our board recruitment process. David moved, Malcolm seconded, PASSED unanimously.

### **Executive Director Update – Executive Director Will Everitt**

Will said the science presentation tonight is important because so much of what we do for the Bay flows from our scientific data. Reflecting on the summer, in many ways, this summer has been our most “normal summer” in years. This summer we:

- Organized six in person get-togethers and trainings for our Water Reporters
- We had our first house party in four years
- We held our first-ever Casco Bay day with the Freeport Oyster Bar
- We had our Members Annual Meeting at Spring Point, our first annual meeting on the SMCC campus in years and years and our first event right there at Spring Point.
- We passed 1 million data points in CMS data!
- Did our first collection of PFAS samples

This was a summer reconnecting with our supporters and volunteers. On the financial side, we have held our own throughout the spring and summer and things have looked on target for us budget-wise. The big fundraising push is October through January. He expressed appreciation to Sarah Lyman and Susan Bosco. We launched a search for Communications Coordinator; we have already had a lot of applications for that.

In October the Board will have two advocacy deep dives. On October 5 from 5-6:30 Ivy has organized a tour of the Back Cove storage conduit for the Board and we will discuss our strategies for reducing stormwater into Casco Bay. This is one of our top advocacy priorities as stormwater is the largest source of pollution into our waters by volume. Reducing local sources of pollution like this helps the health of the Bay, obviously, but it also can help make our waters more resilient to the global impacts of Climate Change that we, as a community, cannot control. Then at next Months’ board meeting, we will focus on our advocacy efforts and priorities, giving you an inside peek at our challenges and opportunities. We are proud that Ivy was re-nominated to the Coastal and Marine Working Group with the Maine Climate Council.

Will explained the banking resolution. For more than a decade, we have paid KeyBank \$300 a year for a \$50,000 line of credit we have never used. Two years ago, looking at our balance sheet and the other banks we do business with, our controller recommended that we not renew that line of credit because our other banks will give us ones should we need it. So in 2022 we canceled that line of credit. This month, however, we received a \$600 bill for the line of credit for last year and for this year. KeyBank apologized and said that since our Board President Bud Higgins opened that line of credit, we cannot close it without a board resolution. So this resolution will let us officially close a line of credit we thought we closed two years ago.

**Action Item:** *Resolution to close Key Bank Line of Credit: At the request of Key Bank: Let the minutes of the meeting of the Board of Directors of Friends of Casco Bay on September 19, 2023 reflect our vote in the affirmative to have Will Everitt, Executive Director, close the Key Bank Lending line of credit of \$50,000 immediately.*

Stephen moved, Pat seconded, PASSED unanimously.

Will shared that he is cautiously optimistic that we may have found our new office space. We sent a Letter of Interest on a 2,000 square foot 3rd floor space in the Star Match Building at 65 West Commercial Street, Portland. J.B.Brown and Company owns the building. The space has a lot going for it. Most of it is an open concept, giving us flexibility with how we use it. It’s a great location, right across from Portland Yacht Services and has plenty of free parking. Staff have seen it and like it. There is not a lab in it, so we need to explore building out a lab. The tenant will be there until December. If things move forward, build out would begin in January. We do not have a lease yet and we will keep the board posted.

There was a discussion of the office space as the Board asked Will questions about it. He clarified it's smaller than our current space and given how we work now, with only five to six staff at the office at the same time. We rarely have our entire staff in the office except for staff meetings. Looking at how we operate now, we don't need as much space as we currently have. The space we are looking at would allow for three closed off office spaces with a lot of "hot desks." There is a small conference room for common space and meetings. The budgetary implications are that the office space will be a lot more than we are currently paying: We now pay \$18,000/year. The market is \$20/square foot, so our rent will be in the \$40,000 range. We have been budgeting for increased rent for the last three years. We are interested in a five-year lease that is then renewable for another five. The buildout estimate is in our current budget. *Could we include green energy (or a heat pump)?* Will said we don't have green energy because we don't own the building but Malcolm said that he suspects JB Brown may be willing to work with us. Malcolm shared that our reserves can be used to invest in something such as a lab space that we want for the next decade. *What kind of staff expansion can this space adjust to?* Will estimates 10 people working there. During the strategic planning process, we discussed maintaining this staff size through the strategic plan. This space supports the hybrid way we work right now, and assumes that we will continue the hybrid model. *What is the SMCC office space timeline?* The former president gave us till July of next year and that president, Joe Cassidy, left in August to be president of St. Joseph's College. SMCC has an interim president. SMCC Staff has walked through our office, planning for what they will use it for next.

#### **Community Engagement Committee Update – Vice President Kirsten Piacentini**

Kirsten reported that we had a well-attended meeting on September 5. There are new times for the CEC: First Tuesday of every month. The first Tuesday of December is the same time as the donor appreciation event so we will likely cancel that meeting. The Donor Appreciation Event is Tuesday, December 5, we hope you can be there. The Film Fest for Casco Bay: Raffle items in by tonight! Sara passed around a volunteer signup sheet for Board volunteer opportunities at the event. The Water Reporter Appreciation event has been postponed to November. We also debriefed the Oyster Bar event which turned out to be a great event, in part because it was a lower price point that CEC had recommended at prior meetings. This is a great example of CEC at work!

#### **Environmental Justice, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee update – Committee Chair Pat Ianni**

EJDEI has been working really hard on the statement - we are at Version 9! We started meeting last fall and EJDEI has ebbed and flowed with Howard, Joanie and Robby stepping off, but Deb is a wonderful addition and staff has provided wonderful input. Staff Member Sara joined the committee. We put together a revised statement. The intent is to post it on the web with more potential uses going forward. We decided it would be a full organization statement (as opposed to just the board or staff). In July we sent it to the full board and staff for comments. Pat and Will then tried to incorporate the comments as best they could. Pat and Will edited the statement we are considering tonight based on those comments. Board and staff comments were genuine, insightful, and thoughtful. We are also continuing to meet monthly, the second Monday of each month - online only. Sandy reiterated that board and staff input was valuable and the document currently has had a lot of input and we have been very careful to get that input into the various revisions.

*How will we hold ourselves accountable? Do the next steps include this?* The committee will hold ourselves accountable and revisit where we are on these goals. Accountability is in part from our commitments in the

strategic and operating plans. Malcolm encouraged us to be alert to going around in circles. This can be avoided through good management through the operating plan, strategic plan, and the budget process. Pat pointed out that a lot of our actions in the statement overlap with governance and board recruitment so we can weigh in on these points using the EJDEI statement.

**Action Item:** *Approval of EJDEI Statement*

Ellen moved, Seb seconded, PASSED unanimously

**Discussion of Board Self-Assessment Survey and Recruitment of Future Board Members –President Sandy Marsters and Ellen Grant**

Ellen and Sandy shared that we are trying to standardize board practices and recruitment through identifying gaps and skills we want on the Board. Board has prioritized qualities and qualifications of potential board members. Sandy shared that Ellen will be helping us as we move forward. Ellen has 30 years of experience, partly at the Institute for Civic Leadership where she trained nonprofit boards and matched board members to organizations.

Will shared a history of how we got here. During the early part of the pandemic we did not recruit new board members. In the past year, during our strategic planning process we delayed bringing on a new board member so we did not have to bring them up to speed. Over the summer we asked Board and Staff for potential board members nominees. We received 18-20 candidates. We can continue to look at and add to this list.

Ellen reflected that Friends of Casco Bay is in great shape and has a strong board but like any nonprofit there's always little pieces and parts that we want to improve. We want to do three things tonight: get reactions to the survey, share our plans, and decide where we might go forward and hear thoughts, and what are next steps. Over the next few months we would plan to recruit two to three new board members. Each year we would have a process by which we generate new board nominees based on our needs and gaps, which will lead to a really solid board. The goal is to have a pipeline. We never want to just be filling seats, we want to have a group of possible people and figure out who the best person is at any given moment. We want to be attentive to what we currently have on the board and what we need.

There was a discussion about the self-assessment survey. Board members noted that the experienced categories are balanced currently.

Some felt that the assessment list is too simplistic. There are a few things that are very objective, such as gender and these are actionable gaps. It's very relevant to this work. There are qualities like leadership, management, organization that are not reflected here. This was not a survey of our board's strengths and weaknesses. Seb reflected that the board needs to do an assessment of ourselves as a group. Sandy shared that is a conversation that we should have at a future meeting.

Board members noted that on the whole, many on the Board are in the older age brackets. There is an opportunity to recruit young people. Our board is white there is opportunity to increase diversity. Board members commented that diversity includes race/ethnicity and professional and socioeconomic background. Ellen proposes that we don't redo the assessment at this time because we have plenty to work on from this one. We talked about doing this annually so the tool will only get better. We will have many opportunities to improve on this.

Ellen noted that what was apparent from the assessment to Sandy, Will, and her was in gender: we have a majority of males so this is an actionable area to move forward. We want to recruit more women. And as we recruit, we want to identify nominees that fill in multiple categories that are 'weak' on this self assessment chart. It was noted that Malcolm is in his last term and he is treasurer. Does someone on the board already possess this skill? We do not have much experience in advocacy.

Ellen shared that we want to bring Board Members on in small cohorts of two to three people. Ellen, Will and Sandy will look at the nominee list and see who fills the gaps, then come up with a list of four. They will then send names to the board and make sure that there are no reservations about anybody (confidentiality). Then we will start the process of interviewing them. We will not automatically invite people on the board, but weigh qualifications and interests with our identified gaps.

**What did we see and do this summer? A discussion about our field season** *Staff Scientist Mike Doan and Science and Policy Associate Heather Kenyon*

Heather reviewed the basics of ongoing monitoring programs: Our Continuous Monitoring Program has three stations that are in the water collecting data every 15 minutes, year-round. For seasonal monitoring, we visit twenty-two sites across the Bay every three weeks. Heather then showed us the seasonal monitoring map online. You can go to any one of these and see the most recent data. We still have one more seasonal sampling event to go in early October. Because we still have one more event and total nitrogen samples are still at the lab, we will do deeper analysis after the season is over.

Heather explained how staff took extra samples in Maquoit Bay, which is not looking as bad as last year as far as water quality. We took these extra samples because we have been working with the town of Brunswick to implement a task force to do a water quality study of Maquoit Bay. They are using an independent contractor to look at baseline water quality and also look at land use. The parameters that staff test for are: chlorophyll, dissolved oxygen, salinity, water depth, Secchi depth (water clarity), temperature, total nitrogen turbidity, and pH (acidity). Depending on the site, we sample at the surface or do "profiles," sampling top to bottom of the water column.

It has been a quiet year, there have not a lot of major nuisance algal blooms. Some blooms did occur but not as frequent as past year. They have been occurring in the midcoast.

Heather shared that we partnered with Chris Aeppli at Bigelow Labs to take PFAS samples at all of the sites. The analyzer Bigelow has is brand new so we do not have results yet. Bigelow has just started to run the samples and they will share that with us when they get results. We are working with Chris to increase and expand this effort going into next year. Chris got a grant through the EPA Coastal Watersheds Program to increase PFAS sampling. This is going to require a lot more time from us as staff because we will take sediment samples which will be the first sediment samples from Maine for PFAs. We want this to help regulators, users, decision makers make a connection from what is coming off the land into the water. We will gather together stakeholders to identify sites and decide how often samples will be taken.

Over the course of five Fridays this summer Heather went out to six sites in Back Cove and took total nitrogen samples because of all of the rain. The total nitrogen samples are still at the lab.

Mike then showed us a photo of the “cage of science,” made up of a data sonde, a multi-parameter instrument, which we also use for seasonal sampling, and a partial pressure carbon dioxide sensor (pCO<sub>2</sub> sensor). We increased data collection from every hour to every fifteen minutes year round this year. As you know, the carbon dioxide sensor has been discontinued. But, if you have two of the four carbonate parameters you can calculate the other two, so we are looking for other ways to get to all four parameters. We have been working with University of New Hampshire to process total alkalinity samples as our replacement parameter for the carbon dioxide data. Mike shared that we passed 1 million data points in continuous data!

Mike explained that the website has data from all three stations. You can click on each station and look at the current year's data compared to historical data. It gives you the daily means. You can see we had a warm winter. We also set some records at the end of July but it was not our warmest summer. Last summer was warmer. We are above average water temperature this summer. Salinity was low throughout the summer. It takes a lot of rain to nudge salinity down. Snow and ice melting will do that but rarely a large storm will do much with our salinity data until this year, so this is extremely notable this year. Dissolved oxygen is also low this year.

We also look at the daily mean calculations for all three sites and compare them against one another. Portland harbor consistently has colder water than other sites. Harpswell has lower salinity because of Kennebec's influence.

The offshore algal bloom wasn't persistently present in Casco Bay; it might have dipped in here and there. It's a dinoflagellate that is not toxic. The concern is it dying and decomposing in the water. Others up the coast others did not see the influence of the bloom either.

Mike gave an update on the “sensor squad” which is a Friends of Casco Bay, Wells National Estuarine Research Reserve, and University of New Hampshire collaboration. We test equipment and sensors and make sure they are as accurate as possible. The Broad Reach grant gave us the support we need to make this collaboration happen. We do a lot of comparison of instruments and test different methods for getting more quality and accuracy out of the data.

Mike went into more detail about the carbonate parameters, specifically total alkalinity calculation and why it is important. We are working on using other parameters on our sonde along with total alkalinity which then we can calculate the other carbonate (or “ocean acidification”) parameters. Improving our techniques here will allow other groups like ours to do this work statewide. Our work is being looked at as a model.

Other than making sure our data is the best that we can get, the “sensor squad” is going to share our techniques and data with all of the institutions that are part of the Maine Ocean Climate Collaborative. This is exciting because a lot of people use the same instruments as we do and it will increase the accuracy statewide.

**Adjourn: Sandy adjourned the meeting at 7:32pm.**