

**Friends of Casco Bay  
Community Engagement Committee  
Minutes Tuesday, October 3, 5:30-6:30 p.m.  
Meeting held via Zoom**

**In attendance**

Board: Kirsten Piacintini (Chair), Steve Bushey, Ellen Grant, Pat Ianni, Sandy Marsters, Seb Milardo, Malcolm Poole

Staff: Will Everitt, Sara Freshley, Sarah Lyman

**1. Welcome and check-in question:** What is your favorite thing about Fall?

**2. Important fall updates:**

- **Film Festival, Saturday, November 4, 2-6 p.m.**

- Staff thanked Board for all the ways you are helping with this event. From procuring and donating raffle items, to helping with Sponsorship, to volunteering day of. We are showing 12 films with a variety of content. We are playing up the “fest” this year: We expect to have oysters, a seaweed product (perhaps a kelp smoothie), and Starbucks drinks. We also expect to have a key partner or two to table to allow for new connections.
- Sponsorships: Huge Media support from WCLZ and from Ocean Navigator. Right now we are at \$9,600, just under our goal of \$10,000.
- Tickets sold to date:159. This is low compared to pre-COVID times Board can help us promote the event by sharing the emails with friends, family and colleagues. You can forward an email that we have already sent or we can give you additional content. You can also pass out posters.
- If you want to have a role or job at the event and have not already signed up, let Sara Freshley know. If you still have raffle items, contact Sarah Lyman to sort pick up or drop off.
- Question from CEC: are there ways to promote it that we have not? Sarah mentioned that CLZ is going to ramp up promotions. We also may connect to groups now that we know which films. For example, we are showing a unicycle film, can we connect with a bike group?
- CEC thinks that partnership tabling is a great idea. Slow ticket sales may be in part due to a hot September. Last year folks could stream the films but we are not doing that this year because MOFF is not offering it. We are having a Film Fest viewing for our volunteers in advance of film fest. Board members are invited to this if they are volunteering during Film Fest.

- **Annual Fund and Special Appeal letters**

- The letters are printed, Will will be signing them this week.
- The Annual Fund effort is essential to our development work and raises upwards of \$50,000 per year. This twice a year mailing helps us capture donors that our

membership cycle does not capture. The Board does an incredible job signing these - thank you! We do Annual Fund twice a year so you did do this in the spring and we are now asking you to do this again.

- Susan Bosco is preparing packets of Annual Fund letters to you to pen notes on. This is an important way you support our work every year.
- Each of you will receive 75-100 letters. This is a little different than we have done in prior years. Instead of asking how many you want to do, we have separated them into 100 chunks. Please commit to 75. If you can do 100, awesome.
- If you cannot accept this many, let us know.
- Please expect the packets to be hand delivered to you late this week or early next week. Let us know when they are complete. Have them ready for pick up by Monday October 23.

- Communications Coordinator position
  - We have received more than 20 applicants so far. Hoping to have someone by the end of the year.
- Donor Appreciation event, Tuesday, December 5, 5:30-7:30 p.m at the Cumberland Club
  - Mark your calendar and join us to thank our biggest supporters.
  - We will be sending out prior talking points to you on what to chat with donors about: things were hoping for in the coming year, big news in the last year. You can talk to our donors about what excites you the most about our work.

### **3. Changes coming to Water Reporter and what it means for engaging our community**

Will shared that the Water Reporter app as we know it is going away in early 2024. The organization that developed it for Waterkeepers is no longer going to be updating the app and already we learned that it is not available in the Google Play store. We have long wanted improvements to the app so the silver lining of this news is that it gives us the opportunity to develop a Friends of Casco Bay branded app that is similar and does a lot of things that we wish Water Reporter did. We will be talking to the Commons (a nonprofit app developer) about a custom app that would be easier to use. We want one that users could stay logged in (right now they cannot). We also want the observational data connected to a relational database instead of in spreadsheet form: imagine us being able to easily sort every post by volunteer, region, or issue area. Right now, we cannot easily do that with Water Reporter. We are looking at other improvements and enhancements.

We have worked for five years to get 475 people to identify as Water. We want to make sure we have a really good communications plan between now and January 1, 2024, to make sure volunteers know what's going on and what's going to happen. The question for the committee is what things do we want to make sure we communicate and tell to make sure 475 Water Reporters.

There was a robust discussion about this issue. Board asked how easy or difficult will it be to build and maintain an app? The developer is looking to build a product (with Glide and Airtable) that would make it easier for us to make changes as we move forward on our side. One thing we have learned through this process is that technology changes so frequently. This is true with all technologies that we use including our donor database.

Board members shared that they think this is not going to come as bad news to everybody. We need a new product is going to be better than the old product. We do not launch another version of this that does not fix the headaches that volunteers have with it.

Board members shared that this is really good positive opportunity. A good communication plan on this gives us a chance to reconnect with existing volunteers and new ones. Everyone is starting fresh and new together. We should invite volunteers to say what changes they would like to see. We should use a subset of volunteers to pilot the new app and give feedback that can be rolled into official rollout..

In the communication plan, assume that over communicating is better than under communicating. Keep telling people it is happening. Awareness builds understanding.

Board members asked about the expected cost. We have not signed an MOU but initial estimates are in the \$7,000 range. We have technology funds we can allocate to this.

Some expressed concern that there is a short timeline between the old app going down and new app going up. We need to choose a programmer with the ability to stick with a timeline. We do not want a late development because it risks losing volunteers.

Will shared that the plan is to convert our existing observational data into the new app so we don't lose it. No matter what, we will not lose our existing data because we can definitely extract our data, which we will do before the app goes away.

A board member asked if there are other similar citizen science observation apps in use in the state of Maine. Staff answered yes and that we are evaluating those tools. There are a lot of apps around sea level rise and other specific issues. Right now, we like the concept of Water Reporter because of its versatility. Volunteers can report back on a broad array of issues and observations, not just sea level rise. The program team shared that versatility is valuable.

A board member shared that GMRI received a Packard Foundation grant to build a platform that could be used by others. The goal was a shared platform that could be collecting data of all sorts. Program Officer of Packard really loved GMRI's approach. Sarah shared that we have had multiple conversations with GMRI over the years about their sea level rise app. Separately CBEP pulled together orgs like ours that are using apps to show to local municipalities. We learned about a lot of different apps and tools that are out there. We are going to revisit the tools that are available out there.

For the communication plan, it is important to do it well to maintain trust with volunteers. Sharing this early with volunteers is important. Communicate more than you think you need to. Keep volunteers informed. Kirsten shared the L.L.Bean mantra: crawl, walk, run. Limit the scope for a first release. Get the basic bare minimum in first.

**4. Friends, Neighbors, and Colleagues Gift Membership Program: Who are some friends, neighbors, and/or colleagues that you think should be Friends of the Bay? We will give them a gift membership!**

This membership effort is based off of our operating plan and the goals that we set out. One way that we plan to grow support is through giving gift memberships. Board members can offer a one-year gift membership to friends, family, and colleagues. We will work to renew those memberships the the following year. Friends of Casco bay is covering the cost. Board members are not responsible for the payment of the gift membership. A year after a person receives their gift membership, we will follow up with them and invite them to continue to be a member with us by giving a membership donation.

The Board was asked to share names by emailing Sarah Lyman. We will see if they are already members, so you do not need to know if they are or not. There is not a criteria for the gift memberships: there are circles of people that you know that our organization does not.

Board were asked to think of five to ten names by the board meeting. At this time, we just need names, not addresses.

Kirsten adjourned the meeting at 6:31 p.m.