

Friends of Casco Bay
Minutes: Environmental Justice, Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (EJDEI) Committee Meeting
Monday, November 13, 2023, 4pm via Zoom

Attendance, board: Pat Ianni (chair), Deb Debiegun, Sandy Marsters
Staff: Will Everitt, Sara Freshley, Ivy Frignoca

1. Updates from Staff and Board Committee members since our last meeting

Should we continue to meet at this time and date - yes. This time works for everyone.

Sara shared that she is beginning to do high school and college student group engagement work, contacting environmental clubs to invite them to be a part of our work for the Bay. Sara invited students to participate in Film Fest by giving away some tickets to SMCC and USM students.

Ivy shared that there are two areas where we are deepening our EJ work. First, as we begin working on improving the state's stormwater rules, (Chapter 500), Ivy will serve on the stakeholder group to draft the rule revisions. Sara is going to do EJ watershed mapping in Casco Bay to identify areas between environmental justice populations and stormwater pollution in preparation for eventually engage those communities in this process. We are using stormwater maps and the EPA EJ databases. This work will happen next year.

Secondly, DMR is holding a series of conversations with shellfish harvesters and aquaculturists, which are open to the public. Sara will attend the first of these meetings tomorrow. We will also be going to the Fishermen's Forum to hear more from lobstermen. This is part of our work to better understand the concerns of those who depend on our coastal waters for their work.

Sandy shared that Ellen and Will are meeting with Samantha Bengs to discuss about Sam's potential board service. Sam meets many of our desired skills, experiences, and backgrounds we wish to see on the board but we need to evaluate her fit.

2. Brief review of our EJDEI Statement

EJDEI Statement (v9) was presented to Board at the 9/19/2023 meeting and adopted by unanimous vote. This statement can now be found at the bottom every page of website (as of 10/4/2023) via a link to "[Our Statement on Environmental Justice](#)." There were two comments made by board members prior to the adoption of the Statement:

- How will we hold ourselves accountable? Per the minutes of the 9/19/2023 meeting, we responded that we will hold ourselves accountable by frequently revisiting our goals made in the Statement, namely assessing our progress on the six "actions" listed in the Statement and the goals set forth in our Strategic Plan (2023-2028).
- We should be alert to "going around in circles"? We responded that we hope to avoid this by adhering to the Operating Plan, following the guidelines of the Strategic Plan, and sticking to the budget. We also hope that our EJDEI goals will be used to inform and steer our governance and board recruitment processes.

Ivy suggested creating a matrix to keep track of what we are doing and to measure progress. It can be a summary and shared frequently. Will offered to take a first stab at it and will pass it around the next meeting.

3. Discussion about our planned future work with Cross Cultural Community Services (CCCS)

As part of our comment to EJDEI, we are hiring CCCS (see MOU attached) to help us with three things:

1. Provide a board and staff training on the immigrant experience in Maine so we are better educated and prepared to have conversations with potential new partners and do outreach. This training will take place April 30, 5pm-8pm and will be for Board and staff. We will debrief the training at our May EJDEI committee meeting.
2. Help us with relationship building: CCCS will introduce us to organizations we are not currently working with who may have intersecting concerns with us.
3. Provide advice and consultation on EJDEI work at an operational level. Staff leadership is meeting with CCCS on January 23.

There was a discussion on how engaging the immigrant community in Portland and ensuring that it connects to our work to protect the Bay.

4. Discuss our ongoing Board work to effectuate the EJDEI actions enumerated in our Statement

Pat shared that we previously discussed initially focusing on Board recruitment. How do we build relationships with new partners and new segments of the community to diversify our board in terms of age, experience, race, country of origin, etc.? Can CCCS help us reach out to new colleagues and partners?

Before we get to a more diverse board we can focus on other actions like networking and building relationships. It was acknowledged that a lot of this is going to fall onto staff to lead.

Ellen and Sandy have been leading the board recruitment process. We had one person of color on our potential board recruitment list so far. There was a discussion of adding people with more diverse backgrounds to this list. By laying a foundation and relationships within more diverse groups, our networks will naturally become more diverse and this will take time. We should keep this in mind with gift memberships. Another idea was meeting with leaders in our community who are also people of color or represent other diverse groups, for example Jill Dusen and Pious Ali, to find out if they know people who may be interested in our work. Perhaps we should consider writing articles and publishing them in other neighborhood newspaper to reach a wider audience. We will continue to consider these questions and add to the matrix as they come up.

5. Other Next Steps

There was a short discussion about potentially reviewing governance documents and practices including by laws, committees, meeting format (in person, zoom, hybrid, etc.) for inclusivity.

Will shared that we operate a lot more openly than our bylaws read and he hopes that we make those things match up one day. Due to time, this conversation was kept short.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:03 p.m.