

Friends of Casco Bay Board Meeting Minutes
November 21, 2023
Gulf of Maine Research Institute, Commercial Street, Portland and via Zoom

Present: Deb Debiegun, Ellen Grant, Pat Ianni, Sandy Marsters, Anthony Moffa, Malcolm Poole, Janna Rearick

Staff: Will Everitt, Sara Freshley, Ivy Frignoca, Heather Kenyon (online), Sarah Lyman,
Welcome – President Sandy Marsters

Sandy asked those attending, in the spirit of the advocacy conversation we are having tonight, what is your favorite issue that we work on? He also asked for a “Minute for the Bay”, for someone to *share a reflection about the Bay, about the watershed, or about our work.*

Action Item: Acceptance of Consent Agenda

Malcolm suggested modifying the minutes of the board meeting: he asked to put a period at the end of the sentence after the words “executive session” and removing the language that assume what we did in the executive session. With that change, Malcolm moved, Ellen seconded.
PASSED.

Community Engagement Committee Update: Film Fest Debrief, Sandy Marsters

Kirsten is absent tonight so Sandy shared the committee update and then asked board members to debrief the film festival.

Board members had many positives to say about the event. The “Film Fest was spectacular. The energy was amazing and it felt proud to be part of the organization.” The messages were right and we did a good job connecting our mission with the films: a syncing around values. Logistically it was flawless. Board members shared that their friends at the event gave us positive reviews. Attendees loved having the filmmaker there. Having a live component is a big draw. Will handled that discussion well. The raffle, oysters, drinks all contributed to an energizing afternoon. We were excited about the ticket sales (400+), and like everything since the pandemic, people don't commit until really late.

In terms of things to improve, there was agreement that it was too long. We would like to see broader diversity of demographics. There was a suggestion that maybe we can get the word out at local outdoorsy shops. We did offer free tickets to our college student contacts. Another area of improvement is the parking situation. One person commented that we did not suggest alternative ways to get there such as by bike or bus. We have long looked at the Film Fest as a fundraiser and a friend-raiser. We need to encourage more corporate sponsors because it's such a feel good event.

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

Mark your calendars for April 30 for training with Cross Cultural Community Services. As a committee we are looking to make sure we can track our progress to make sure we are

accomplishing the actions listed in our statements. We are creating a chart to help us with that. Anybody on the board is welcome to join this committee. Our effort to include more diversity needs to include more mentoring or invitation of new members to participate wholly.

Governance: How our officer slate looks like at this point, *President Sandy Marsters and Ellen Grant*

Ellen updated the board that we are making nice headway on recruiting. We met with two of the four that we asked the board to vet. They have been fun meetings. Folks are excited about Friends of Casco Bay. We approach them explaining that we are in the process of expanding our board and we want to chat with you about where we are at in our strategic plan and our five-year vision. We want to gauge people's interest and if they know anyone else who may be interested. We finish the meetings by explaining that we are in a process talking with many folks and we are looking for who is the best fit for now. The goal is to bring new prospects in January who would be approved then to get us back to the number we want to get to. Going forward we would want to be on an annual process in May/June/July. Both folks we met with so far would make great board members but not sure they match our priorities at this time. With two more board members we will be at a total of 15 which is in our target range 15-18. But we need to keep the pipeline open and keep talking to people.

Sandy explained the development of the slate of officers for the 2024 meeting. Malcolm is treasurer and terms off in 2026, Pat as clerk terms off in 2025 and Sandy as president terms off in 2027. The slate this summer (perhaps voted on in May) will be Kirsten as president and we do not have an automatic step up to vice president. Malcolm will need an understudy at some point. Pat has agreed to serve out clerk until she terms off. At some point we need to consider a new clerk and an understudy of Malcolm. The big gap is Vice President. At-large Executive Committee members are: Seb, David, Ellen, Steve.

Ivy suggested Marti Blair of Casco Bay Estuary Partnership as an understudy to Malcolm because she is retiring soon. Pat reminded us to keep DEI in your purview at all times. Ellen confirmed that they have made outgoing calls to folks letting them know that a goal is greater diversity and looking for help finding us. She hopes that one of the three that we recommend in January is a person of color who will bring a lot of other skills, talents, interests, and benefits.

Baykeeping: The Year Ahead (Stormwater and Climate Change) – *Casco Baykeeper Ivy Frignoca*

Ivy shared that a lot of what we do in Baykeeping is similar to chess or another equivalent strategic game: you have to do it in incremental steps and you don't know what the reactions will be. You have to use the best data you have to make decisions. The best data is often projections. Our approach is to be as nuanced, adaptive and humbling as we can possibly be.

Our strategic plan identifies the priorities of focusing on the impact of climate change and reducing pollution.

Ivy shared that the Program Team on staff now consists of four people: Heather, Sarah, Mike, and Ivy. The team started a grid or matrix to mesh our science, advocacy, and community engagement efforts. They had a team retreat as they and Will spent a whole morning looking at our data and stormwater and the big picture, what do we know and what do we not know. They spent the afternoon creating a draft matrix that identified all of the issues that we are working on and what issues are emerging, such as PFAs and eelgrass. Science: how do we track change? Advocacy: how to implement change? Community engagement: how do we connect to the community about change?

The “Sensor Squad” is looking at how to best track ocean acidification in coastal waters in Maine. If you have two of four ocean acidification parameters you can calculate the other two. We had been tracking partial pressure of carbon dioxide and pH as our two key parameters. But the logger on the PCO2 sensor is being discontinued and we have learned that it is not accurate in the field. Mike and the Sensor Squad are double checking our pH data, working on quality assurance, and are now collecting total alkalinity water samples. The pH and total alkalinity samples will likely be our “new” two parameters. Our learning will become a part of the Climate Council so its a model to be used for the entire State. NOAA has invited the Sensor Squad to their meetings. Our observation networks and data through Water Reporter really help complete this picture. What are we doing with this data? This ties into Ivy’s work on the Coastal Marine Working Group of the Maine Climate Council.

The new thing that we are delving into is looking up into the watershed using the mapping tools that exist and our databases to reach into new communities that we have not worked with before to engage in our work. We are in more meetings with clambers and lobstermen and going out into the municipalities to attend meetings. We are trying to engage and weave this outreach together. We are working with Friends of the Presumpscot River and Presumpscot Regional Land Trust. Will Sedlack, who was Ivy’s first extern will be the Land Trust’s new Executive Director and they are an important partner of ours. We are going to meetings to listen and learn. We are trying to get grounding, credibility, and presence.

What programs are we missing or need to develop? We are expecting to be very involved in the blue carbon strategy and the monitoring strategy of the Maine Climate Council’s work. As that process starts Sara and Ivy will give presentations because we want the public to be engaged in the Climate Council process. We are part of a network that works on climate change. There are other organizations that we turn to for guidance. There are very few people taking the lead on advocacy, especially on marine water. We need more people to take all the data and experiment and make things happen. Heather and Ivy are doing research on how to evaluate water quality standards so we can lobby the state to change the regulations. Climate change underlies everything we do.

Stormwater is also going to be a big piece of work in the coming months. Staff compared our data to the river flow data. Sara was looking at the fact that there were no nuisance algal blooms this year despite all of this rain water this year. We have a lot of questions. We don't have our nitrogen data back yet. Our working hypothesis is that we have been sunlight limited all

summer. We had low productivity in the Bay. Meanwhile, the flows coming out of the combined sewer overflows were off the charts this summer.

Because of our expertise on stormwater policy and implementation of the MS4 permit, Ivy was asked to be part of the state's steering committee process to revise the Chapter 500 stormwater rules. Ivy shared that our MS4 work and appeals have elevated the respect for us instead of creating enemies. This fall, the DEP wanted to go out on the boat with us and they are changing what they are doing in their permits because of the boat trip. We have maintained an open dialogue. The Chapter 500 steering committee will meet the first week in December. Under the steering committee, there is a stakeholder group and a technical advisory committee. The technical advisory committee includes engineers who will help with the technical side of the recommendations the steering committee comes up with.

In part, a goal of our stormwater pollution advocacy is to undue harm from past development. It is clear that we need to develop more because we need new houses and more housing in general in Maine; we need to do this in ways that prevent future harm. This is complicated by the fact that we have more people, more storms, more precipitation.

Malcolm shared that until 1980, engineering-wise, the goal was how fast can you get storm water to the ocean? Now we are talking about retention, time delays, and filtration.

Ivy shared that our stormwater laws need to use of low impact development. Right now, most of the state's rules only apply to developments of an acre or more. It should apply to smaller lots. Ivy encouraged the board to stay tuned when it comes to stormwater. We are shaping a public outreach campaign around education and public involvement. The goal is that by June there are recommended revisions and a draft rule. The new rules will then go to the Board of Environmental Protection with a public comment period. Sara will be tracking the process through Heather and Ivy to help build public support. Our stormwater work is linked to our environmental justice work. Sara is using new Environmental Justice mapping tools to look at what neighborhoods are most impacted by stormwater and will be working to get more people involved in public process of the stormwater rulemaking.

The board asked about the chances the deadlines slip? Ivy is optimistic about these deadlines because the State hired an excellent outside facilitator, Forest Bell. This will help keep it on track.

Ellen asked if we did this a massive amount of work, is it enough work? Is it going to get us the results we want in the time line proposed? Is the body of work enough to ultimately meet our five year goals?

Ivy reflected that the issues we work on build upon each other and these things were implemented now are built on successes we made two or three years ago, including the Maine Climate Council's four-year plan. There are very few advocates on the marine impacts of the plan. We are picking our battles as far as moving the biggest boulders as far as we can get them.

Executive Director Update – *Executive Director Will Everitt*

We have a lease on 65 West Commercial Street, Suite 301 in the historic Star Match building. We have a signed contract with our contractor, Duke Carpentry. Right now, they are scheduled to begin working on our lab build-out, updating our flooring, fresh paint, and a few smaller improvements starting in January. We are shooting to move in in February or March. We want the space to have a welcoming vibe and a space that staff are happy working in.

We are in transition with our Water Reporter program. We are still in due diligence mode as we work on the path forward for replacing the Water Reporter app. The good news is that everything seems to be checking out with moving forward with the Commons, a nonprofit app developer. Our goal is to have an app that is much easier for our volunteers to use and much more useful for our staff on the backend to organize and use the observational data. We have a check in meeting on November 30 with the app developer after which we may give the green light on that project.

Between our new office space, the build-out of the lab, our potential update to Water Reporter, we are paying for more “big ticket” items than we would normally pay for at this time of year. This is not a problem for us at this time. These items are in the budget one way or another and our budget recognizes this is a stretch year for us. In the case of the office, we padded the budget to include a build out and move. In the case of Water Reporter, this is an unplanned expense, but we have technology funds that are in the budget to cover that.

Sarah Lyman and Will are looking at the move and Water Reporter as fundraising opportunities. The more we can raise toward these efforts on top of our “normal” fundraising, the stronger we will be. We received a \$25k gift toward the move from one of our top donors, on top of the \$25k we normally receive from the donor. Sarah has set up a handful of meetings with other donors in the coming weeks.

Our collaborative approach plays out in advocacy as you heard, but it also plays out in Fundraising. I just found out today that Casco Bay Estuary Partnership (CBEP) approved a \$4k increase in supporting our Water Quality Monitoring work for next year, bringing their support to \$44k a year. This is a relationship we have worked hard to maintain and improve. CBEP today is our closest partner. You will hear more at future board meetings, but we also found out this month that a joint fundraising proposal with CBEP, Manomet, Team Zostera, was funded. As part of that grant, we will be receiving an additional \$15k in each of the next two years to help monitor water quality near eelgrass beds as we work to better understand why we have lost 54% of our eelgrass over the past 5 years.

This is the time of year that brings our income budget into clearer focus. Much of our individual, corporate, and foundation income comes in November, December and January. So when we meet in January, we will have a much clearer picture of our finances. Depending on the strength of year-end giving, or not, we may have to watch our cash flow more closely in the next fiscal year. Know that we are watching income and expenses closely--not because we are

worried about this year, but because we want a good idea of what fiscal year 2025 will look like.

We had 48 applicants to our Communications Coordinator position, approximately 20 of which were applicants “in the ballpark.” We have narrowed down those to 7 first round interviews, which begin after Thanksgiving. We hope to have good news on this in early 2024.

If you plan on going to the Donor Appreciation Event let Sarah Lyman know (including anyone you are bringing!). It's one of my favorites of the year. Two hours of relationship building!

Questions, clarifications, concerns, comments

Sarah reminded the board that we still need your 10 gift membership recommendations! Let Sarah Lyman know by the end of the month.

Adjournment

Pat moved, Ellen seconded adjournment, passed unanimously. Adjourned at 7:31 p.m.