

**Star Island Corporation (SIC)  
Chief Executive Officer's Report  
February 5, 2024**

***Our Mission:*** *To own and maintain Star Island and such other property as the Corporation may hold or acquire, as a center for religious, educational, and kindred purposes consistent with the principles of the Unitarian Universalist Association and the United Church of Christ.*

***Our Vision:*** *To create on Star Island an environment that frees all who come to renew spiritually, explore matters of consequence, and gain knowledge about the world as it might ideally be. We aspire to live this vision on and off Star Island.*

***Our Strategic Plan:*** *Our Strategic Plan has four main goals – Community, Environment, Financial Stewardship, and Governance. This report is organized around these goals.*

## **COMMUNITY**

- The 2024 Regular Season Pelican application process was launched in early December, and we have been enhancing our promotional efforts this year in a number of ways, including building off some of the initiatives that were successful last year. We hosted an information session for prospective new Pelicans on January 18, and we continue to promote this amazing employment opportunity even though the priority application date of January 22 has passed. Please help spread the word – information and online application is on the [Work and Volunteer](#) page of our website.
- The Pelican hiring team, ably led by Kate Brady, has started the process of putting together a 2024 Pelican team. As of today, we have less applicants than usual (142 applications vs. 5-year average of 165 applications). Though we have a number of strong candidates, we are still accepting regular season Pel applications ([Work and Volunteer](#)), on a rolling basis. We will be reaching out to some supervisor applicants soon, and we anticipate sending out all agreements by mid-March, as in past years.
- We are in the process of assembling our 2024 seasonal professional staff team (managers and specialists) – we are sending out job offers for returning workers this week, and we anticipate advertising for vacancies later this month.
- The Personnel Committee met on January 18 to, among other things, review the attached Safe Community Policy (which includes their recommended edits for 2024). This policy will be reviewed and voted upon by the SIC Board at its February 10 meeting. I have appointed John Bynum and Justina Maji as the 2024 Grievance Officers (as per our Safe Community Policies).
- I participated in a meeting of the Unitarian Universalist Alliance of Camps and Conference Centers (UUACCC) on December 18 to discuss a variety of topics, including infectious disease policies and protocols. The next meeting is scheduled for March 11.
- Also on the professional development front, Laurie Contrino is currently a member of the Leadership Seacoast Class of 2024, and Kate Brady recently attended a “Labor Violations and How to Avoid Them” workshop offered by the Portsmouth Chamber of Commerce.

## **ENVIRONMENT**

- On January 13, the island sustained some weather-related damage due to a variety of meteorological factors, including a significant storm surge. The pier railing system was heavily damaged, and debris (including large rocks) now covers the perimeter road between the EMB and the wastewater treatment facility. We will need to repair all of this before we can open to the general public, and we anticipate

that repairs will be in excess of \$25K. We are in the process of trying to secure some disaster relief funding to help cover some of these expenses.

- The Strategic Facilities Planning Committee (SFPC) met twice last month to discuss various topics, including the draft Capital Improvement Plan (CIP; which is incorporated into the Long-range Integrated Financial Tool (LIFT) – see below). The SFPC recommends the CIP as presented, and there was rich conversation about a number of the projects contained therein. The SFPC is looking to increase its involvement in more island projects and initiatives (in addition to those they are already involved in, such as the Landscape Task Force).
- Work continues on the next phase of the Underworld Project. On January 10, staff met with our project architects, and we will meet again on February 22 to review plans for everything we hope to accomplish this fall and next spring. This second phase of the Underworld project includes moving the entire laundry operation from its current location to the Old Boiler Room (currently used as employee social space), as well as redoing and expanding Pel Hall (the employee dining hall). Our intention is to have both of these projects completed prior to the 2025 operating season.
- We have created an outline of a Fire Detection System Master Plan, which we intend to refine with SFC (our fire safety consultants) and review with Rye Fire Department prior to the start of this season. We made great progress last year, installing a new fire panel and replacing several detectors. The master plan will be a roadmap for a complete overhaul of our system, including specific goals to achieve this year through 2026.
- The 2024 Capital Budget includes \$100K to refurbish Cottage B. We intend to refurbish Cottage C instead (within the same budget), and we will likely propose Cottage B in the 2025 Capital Budget.
- We are working with the Isles of Shoals Steamship Company (Thomas Loughton and Challenger), Granite State Whale Watch (Uncle Oscar), and Seacoast Maritime Charters (Shining Star/Jack Farrell) on planning for our mutual 2024 operating seasons. We are hoping to finalize the 2024 “all boats” schedule by the end of this month.
- Last month, we signed our annual professional services marine transportation and capital project consulting agreement with Seacoast Maritime Charters and our annual fire safety consulting agreement with SFC Engineering.
- On November 15, Liz Erickson and I met with representatives from the University of New Hampshire/Shoals Marine Lab and Maine Coast Heritage Trust, as well as our third-party consultant, Jerry Bley, to discuss various possibilities related to Appledore Island. Jerry will offer a presentation to the SIC Board and its upcoming retreat.

## **FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP**

*NOTE: The Financial Stewardship Goal section of this report now incorporates what used to be covered under two separate sections (Economic and Stewardship).*

- We are working on the December/Year-End (2023) Financials which, as is normally the case, will be finalized later this month. Due to a variety of factors, we are projecting exceeding our FY23 Budget goal for the year of \$64,112. This is a remarkable result, considering the lower than anticipated enrollments at some conferences last year, coupled with a \$100K income loss due to weather-related cancellations in mid-September. Please note that until the December/Year-End Financials are produced, our projections are not final – though it is clear that we will do much better than forecast in the November Financials.

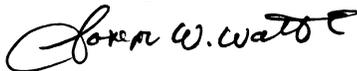
- There are a number of factors that account for this success, chief among them being the 2023 Annual Fund result. Please find attached the Annual Fund Comparison Reports for December 2023 and January 2024. As you can see from the December report, we are (conservatively) forecasting \$759K as a 2023 Annual Fund result, though as noted in the LIFT forecast for 2023, we are likely to come in at \$771K for the year. Thus, due to the generosity of our Shoaler community, we are likely to come in \$56K ahead of budget for the 2023 Annual Fund (and \$46K ahead of the last set of AF projections). The next largest driver of our improved bottom line forecast for FY23 is coming in \$31K under budget for staffing expenses for the year.
- Please find attached the initial draft of the LIFT, a long-range financial planning tool we use for planning out the next few years of operations and capital investment. The LIFT is not a budget (though it includes the 2024 Budget), but rather a tool designed to facilitate longer-range financial planning. We will be discussing the LIFT draft at the upcoming board retreat, and we intend to produce a final draft of the LIFT later this month, after we discuss it with the Finance Committee at its February 29 meeting. As noted above, the SFPC supports the CIP included in the LIFT as presented.
- Online registration was launched on January 15. As of yesterday, we received 1,252 registrations, which is behind where we were at this time last year, but on pace with where we were at this time prior to the pandemic. It is too early to draw any meaningful conclusions from these data.
- The Audit Subcommittee of the Finance Committee and staff will meet with Berry Dunn (our auditors) on February 15, and the audit fieldwork is scheduled for the week of March 4. Our goal is to have a completed audit and Form 990s (for SIC and the Star Island Permanent Trust Fund) to present at the April 2 Board meeting.
- Earlier today, we received official word that we will soon be receiving a grant for \$13,963 from FEMA in connection with the “Major Disaster (FEMA-4516-DR-NH) for the State of New Hampshire due to COVID-19.” This funding is the last expected COVID-19 assistance we expect to receive. Including this grant, SIC secured a total of \$2,212,184 of federal and state emergency grants in connection with the COVID-19 pandemic – this funding was essential for us to weather the pandemic, including the island closure of 2020 and the reduced occupancy seasons of 2021 and 2022.
- On December 31, the value of the Star Island Permanent Trust was \$5,406,948, with a 2024 total account performance of 9.6% (8.8% after fee). This represents a 9.8% increase (investment returns plus donations less distribution less fees) to the overall value of the portfolio since December 31, 2022, when the value was \$4,924,762. Also of note is that SIC transferred \$314,055 to the Trust for 2023, the majority of which was comprised off estate gifts (\$280K), and the balance of which was gifts from living donors (\$25K) and proceeds from memorial stones (\$8K). The transfer of \$314,055 into the Trust is significantly more than the disbursement we received from the Trust of \$216,155 in 2023.
- Our staff marketing team is in the process of discussing our events schedule for 2024 and early 2025 with the goal of coming up with the most effective plan. Existing events include the Gosport Regatta, Starry Night, and the (online) Holiday Auction. We anticipate meeting with representatives of the Piscataqua Sailing Association later this month, to begin planning in earnest for the 2024 Gosport Regatta, currently scheduled for Sunday, September 15.
- Laurie Contrino will offer a fundraising presentation at the upcoming board retreat which will focus on 2023 results, what we have learned, and what we are exploring for this year and beyond.
- We are working on our 2023 Donor and Volunteer Recognition Newsletter, which we expect to publish (electronically) next month.

## GOVERNANCE

- On January 10, we hosted the annual season kick-off Zoom meeting with our 2024 conference leaders. At this meeting, we reviewed some aspects of conference planning, the opening of online registration, a few policies, marketing and outreach (including our 2024 [Discount Program](#)), our [Financial Grants Program](#) and more. We also held up this year's Theme of Growth. We will next meet with our 2024 conference leaders later this month, on February 19 for regular season conferences and on February 26 for September conferences.
- Please find attached SIC's Strategic Plan, 2024-2028, which was approved by the SIC Board in November. We anticipate rolling this out over the next few months, including posting it on our website, sending it out to Corporation members (likely as an attachment to the Annual Meeting packet), and including it in our spring newsletter. The staff is in the process of developing tactics to support the various objectives included in our plan, which serves as a roadmap of where we want to be four years from now.
- We have identified some conferences with which we intend to collaborate on conference marketing and outreach efforts for the 2024 season. One example is All Star 1, and we look forward to meeting with a joint conference/staff marketing team tomorrow to discuss the best ways to "fill the beds" for the 2024 All Star 1 Conference. We have also been working with Building Bridges and the Star Gathering conferences, among others, and we hope to assemble a joint conference/staff marketing team with LOAS 2 later this month.
- The Governance Task Force (GTF) continues to work on our Governance Review. The GTF is in the process of synthesizing the various recommendations made from the four subgroups (Best Practices, Bylaws, Committees & Constituent Organizations, and Membership), with an eye on drafting a report with recommendations. Tom Kennedy, GTF Chair, is preparing a status report of the GTF's work to date, which will be sent to board members separately.
- Speaking of best practices, at the upcoming board retreat we will do a mid-cycle check-in on the board's and CEO's goals for the year ahead.
- We anticipate that the Membership Committee will be recommending 15 individuals for membership in the Corporation.
- The 2024 Annual Meeting of the SIC is scheduled to take place on Saturday, May 4.

We are excited about our 2024 Theme of Growth, and the many ways in which Star Island, Star Island Corporation, conferences, and individuals can grow. It's going to be a great year!

With Star Spirit,



Joe Watts  
Chief Executive Officer