

Town of South Bethany
Planning Commission Meeting Minutes
November 14, 2016

Planning Commission Members Present:

Dick Oliver, Jack Whitney, Joe Conway, Dave Wilson, George Reese, Linda Lewis, Sharon Polansky

Other Attendees: Dee Burbage; Tim Shaw (Council Rep.) – second half of meeting

Meeting called to order: 10:00 a.m. by Chairman Dick Oliver

Administrative matters:

- September meeting minutes have been posted on the Town's website.
- The next meeting is scheduled for December 2, 2016 at 10:00 a.m. (Public hearing Nowell proposed lot subdivision.)
- Plan going forward is for a rotating secretary role among members, with schedule of assignments to be disseminated by the Chairman.
- Change in January meeting date from January 27 to January 13.
- Schedule of future meeting dates to be distributed.
- John Stefani's resignation noted, and new member Linda Lewis welcomed.

New business:

The meeting's primary topic was discussion of who would respond to the PLUS letter (list of State recommendations to update the Comprehensive Plan) and how best to formulate an appropriate response. Delaware's Office of State Planning Coordination's Dorothy Morris was contacted and she clarified the response timeline, noting that with the forthcoming change in administrations, timing was not an issue.

It was agreed that Town Manager Melvin Cusick would draft responses to many of the items the PLUS letter identified and the Planning Commission will review his document before submission. The Planning Commission will draft responses to the Sea Level Rise and Water quality issues. Topics for the Town Manager include:

- Historic Cat Hill Cemetery acquisition: land privately held
- Maps will be provided, where requested (municipal boundaries, future land use)
- Affordable housing: Sussex County is exploring that route, but South Bethany is built up
- Air quality

It was agreed the name of the Sea Level Rise section of the CP would be changed to comply with PLUS letter recommendations to Flooding and Sea Level Rise. Further, our existing phase I SLR study documentation would be appended to the Comprehensive Plan.

Dick Oliver stated he would send the drafts by Jack Whitney and Dave Wilson to the Commission for review and comment and it was agreed that the Planning Commission should complete all comments by the next hearing/meeting, scheduled for December 2, 2016. Comments should be submitted prior to the meeting to reduce review time.

Dick Oliver noted that DNREC would be coming out with a new program for energy grants, green energy, solar panels, and resiliency grants that we could potentially look to for funding.

Much discussion about two topics constituted the lion's share of the meeting: backflow valves and nuisance flooding (tides and rain events) and Phase 2 plan for Sea Level Rise and Flood Mitigation.

Backflow valves

- Installing valves was a simple near-term fix to mitigate nuisance flooding on low-lying streets on the bay side.
- \$1500 earmarked for this purpose in the 2016 Town budget; the same amount was earmarked in 2014 and 2015, but not all the allocation was spent.
- Cost of a large backflow valve ~\$250 (material only)
- Desire to bury backflow valves because they protrude was brought up by Jack Whitney, but Dick Oliver noted that easements would be needed to do this.
- Joe Conway suggested having screens placed on top of the valves so that they would be visible.
- The Town has stated they will install a sign at each location to note the obstruction.
- Dick Oliver suggested a slow rollout to ensure that the valves worked as desired, citing unsubstantiated Fenwick's trouble with some of these.
- Linda Lewis recommended installing these a few at a time rather than require the funds for the entire installation at once, asking that \$1500 be the sum to request.
- The question of why this was not an individual owner's responsibility was raised, but Dick Oliver reminded that the drainage system is the Town's.
- Jack Whitney suggested that the Planning Commission ask the Town to re-appropriate the money previously allocated and not used (\$4500) for installation of 18 valves. All agreed this was a good idea.
- Question of funding source emerged: Sea Level Rise is under the Planning Commission, but the canals are under the Canal Water Quality Commission. We need to establish agreement that the Planning Commission takes ownership of this.
- Joe Conway discussed the wisdom of doing the entire backflow valve project at once vs. phased. He noted his efforts in trying to get the Town to identify capital projects; he has prepared an Excel spreadsheet of these and will disseminate to members.

Phase 2 Sea Level Rise Resiliency Study

- Dick Oliver: Resiliency study is critical to provide trigger points, e.g., how much will happen next 10 years, so what should we do now; not a 50-year wait; need to respond now.
- Nuisance flooding can happen without rain but with high tides; recent flooding has not been because of rain.
 - 6 + main nuisance flooding events in 2016; expected to get worse; nuisance flooding at 2.5 feet NAVD is already higher than SLR for next 50 years, more serious
- Joe Conway walked the group through his Phase 2 presentation
- Joe Conway tasked with creating unifying documents, from his PowerPoint and from Jack Whitney's that speak to Phase 2 so that the proposal can be presented to Town Council.
 - Phase 1 about SLR but did not include storm surge or nuisance flooding.
 - Discussion re. bulkhead heights strategy
- Goal now to get TC to approve Phase 2 study funding.
- Linda: Implement Phase 1 backflow valve strategy; recommend Phase 2.
- Joe: Need to get \$35,000 for Phase 2 in budget now.
- Plan is to give TC members a presentation at the Dec. 9 meeting and we get it on their agenda now for that meeting. Dick will request we be placed on the meeting agenda.
- Document : Joe will develop a draft this week and it will be disseminated to members next week (prior to Dec. 2 special meeting date) so we can discuss the presentation at that meeting time.

Meeting adjourned: 11:54 a.m.

Submitted by: Sharon Polansky, 800 S. Ocean Drive, Member