

**Town of South Bethany  
Planning Commission Meeting Minutes  
January 14, 2017**

**Planning Commission Members Present:**

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

**Absent:** Linda Lewis, Member; Tim Shaw, Council Liaison

**Other Attendees:** Dee Burbage; Mayor Pat Voveris

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

**Administrative matters:**

- The next meeting is scheduled for March 24, 2017 at 10:00 a.m.

**Old business:**

The lion's share of the meeting was a review of responses that have been crafted in reply to items delineated in the PLUS Review letter (list of State recommendations to update the Comprehensive Plan) issued in September 2016 from Delaware's Office of State Planning to the Town of South Bethany. The Commission reviewed each response and took input, where appropriate. Most responses reviewed were considered acceptable as is, without needing further change/input.

Chairman Dick Oliver noted that a number of items don't apply (as per provisions in State code to towns with less than 2,000 population); and, as such, he contacted Dorothy Morris from Delaware's Office of State Planning Coordination who advised that for the appropriate items simply note, does not apply.

Mayor Voveris volunteered to craft a response re. our plan for drainage/check valves, that our town is not idle but proactive and we already have implemented several check valves, with five additional ones in the next budget. However, as we are cooperating with ACT (Association of Coastal Towns), we will need to calibrate our efforts here based on the outcome of planned meetings with the Governor and the other ACT towns.

Joe Conway volunteered to craft a response as well regarding our green energy efforts to date.

Jack Whitney noted that he would then clean up the document with edits and incorporate new inputs, disseminating a final document for review to the Commission before submission to the State.

**New business:**

**Dredging/re-dredging.** Joe Conway discussed the recently established Waterway Management Fund which will provide state funds for the maintenance dredging of our regional waterways. He explained that a recent Coastal Point" article highlighted the maintenance of the Assawoman canal heading north and provided estimates for the southern canal extension which services most all South Bethany boaters. This portion of the canal was not dredged during the first dredging project. He recommended that the Town assure its needs were included in DNREC planning, specifically citing the need for more than the 3' depth discussed in the article. He also highlighted that to get to the newly dredged canal may require South Bethany to dredge its owned waters in Jefferson Bay. Dave Wilson highlighted limits of dredging

and questioned source of Town funding. Joe Conway suggested that we need to monitor depths at key spots so we can estimate rates of shallowing and estimate amount of material needed to be dredged. Mayor Voveris already has been in communication with Chuck Williams on this (and Dick additionally has spoken to Kevin Coyle on this topic) and volunteered to pursue that dialog. Joe Conway volunteered to provide past communications with DNREC to Dick as well.

**State funding.** Dick Oliver noted the “hysteria” around the State budget difficulties with the projected \$360m deficit. He said that the State is looking at what items they can “unload” on the towns, e.g., now, the State is picking up EMT expenses but is suggesting that will be offloaded to the towns. The libraries expect “savage cuts.” Another potential tax burden he suggested might occur is the State siphoning off some of our transfer tax income. Dick said that he is not sanguine about looking to DNREC for project funding.

**Public comment:**

Mayor Voveris spoke to the appreciation for the Planning Commission’s work developing the Phase 2 proposal. She noted, however, that with the establishment of ACT (Association of Coastal Towns) consortium that we will have to look to the Governor, with hopefully “a louder voice” as a group than as a single voice. She has participated in one meeting already and another is scheduled. She also said that under discussion was the possible inclusion of a Planning Commission member to participate in the next meeting.

Joe Conway expressed concern for our local needs re. nuisance flooding issues and that State mitigation strategies may not be targeted to our situation as we are more aligned with Fenwick and Ocean City vs. our northern Delaware beach towns; two different strategies would be needed for two different geographical situations. Even then, noted Jack Whitney, the ground elevations in South Bethany are generally higher than Ocean City and Fenwick so flooding issues that cannot be addressed in Ocean City and in Fenwick may be easier to mitigate in South Bethany.

Discussion about whether the timing is appropriate for maintenance paving until we have more data on nuisance flooding was fueled by Jack Whitney (a proponent of conducting Phase 2 study now before any maintenance paving occurs, lest this be a waste of funds) and Joe Conway (advocating that our roads need maintenance now and micro-surfacing is not a waste of money [in his opinion], anticipating a 7-10 year life expectancy). Joe also suggested that we don’t need other towns to tell us where nuisance flooding issues in our Town exists, and advocated a Town strategy, to which Jack reminded that this was the express purpose of Phase 2. Additional discussion of raising bulkheads and costs was put on the table by George Reese.

Sharon Polansky asked to review PC plans moving forward on the strategic initiatives that have been outlined in the CP. It was agreed to discuss this at the next meeting. A table was previously developed for this purpose and it will be used for review at the next meeting.

**Meeting adjourned:** 11:50 a.m.

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