



Town of South Bethany Committee Report from October 23, 2023

The Canal Water Quality Committee met on October 23 at 10:00am at the Town Hall and online Zoom. Chris Carlyle absent.

Town Council (TC) Liaison Tim Shaw was absent.

Minutes were approved and adopted for the 9/18/23 meeting.

TC Updates: Chris V. provided update in absence of Tim. Committee was informed that Town Council voted to remove all floating wetlands. The Committee is concerned with the mats at the Anchorage canal end where they may have become attached to the bottom of the canal and may be an issue with regulators. Committee's view that this needs to be reviewed further, including a discussion with DNREC by the Town staff. The Committee is also very concerned that the other grasses on the North and East end by the forebay that weren't part of the Floating Wetland are left intact by Envirotech.

It was also shared that Town Council approved maintenance proposal for first 100 feet of canal ends. Committee awaiting an update on the timing, as per the contract terms the CWQC will be involved with the pre-work meeting and the final review of the work upon completion and before payment. We will follow up with the Town Manager to get the timing update on this as well as the removal of the Floating Wetlands, which has the same contract term.

The Committee also understands that the town will work with Solitude to conduct algae removal in the spring of 2024 and a contract is or will be executed to lock down preferred dates. We also understand that discussions are ongoing with DNREC about this removal and cost sharing considering the support DNREC directly provided to Fenwick last year when DNREC hired Solitude for the Fenwick Algae removal as well. Committee is looking to get an update from Town Council on this matter.

Joan Marini has resigned from our committee to join the Town's resiliency committee. Tim Shaw was appointed by the Town Council to officially join our committee as a member to replace Joan. Additionally, Gary Lessing resigned from our committee effective 10/23/23. Chris V. read his resignation letter.

The Committee is aware that we must provide recommendations for next year's budget early in the calendar year.

Canal Maintenance: With the organic waste building up on the east end of the canals (e.g. pine shats, leaves), the Committee is looking to work with Town staff to determine the most ideal time for the Fall cleaning by Envirotech to maximize the impact.

The Committee discussed and acknowledged the direction from Town Council that we focus our efforts next on dredging. The Committee agreed and work has begun starting with the planning and initial outreach to key stakeholders. The Committee further discussed the need to start a dredging sub-committee. In the meantime, some of the Committee members have already started to get more information on Dredging. For example, there was a discussion with the person leading the Fenwick dredging project. Fenwick is working with a consultant who previously worked for DNREC and was involved in dredging projects around the State, Tony Pratt, whom we are aware that the Town of South Bethany knows and has worked with previously too. The Committee also learned that DNREC has a new watershed stewardship director who will be overseeing any Dredging discussions and approvals. We need to engage him and his group as soon as possible.

Observation from some Committee members that the rain gardens in the median of Route 1 need to be maintained. Committee is seeking clarification from the Town staff on how the maintenance of these and the other storm water system components in the median and elsewhere along Route 1 are maintained either by the Town and/or by the State (e.g. DelDOT). The Committee would also like to get guidance if there is a Town program to trim vegetation that is growing over the edge of the bulkheads and/or how this is maintained.

Code/Communications: Committee continues to provide content, reminders, and other general education for both the SBPOA and Town newsletters. The Committee discussed the update that the Town is doing an overall review of our codes. We would like to understand the process, timing and how we can provide input to the Code and Charter Committee's efforts to address some of the ongoing concerns relative to factors impacting water quality (e.g. direct drainage from properties into the canals).

As a follow-up from a prior meeting, the Committee confirmed with Mr. Joseph Hinks that the Town does an annual bulkhead inspection. From our Committee members' informal observations, there are quite a few locations with significant issues with overgrown vegetation including coming through the bulkheads. The Committee would like to get an update from the Town after the next inspection(s).

Floating Wetlands (FW): With the resignation of Gary Lessing, Chris V. asked for a volunteer to take over the lead on this subcommittee.

Grants: Committee discussed that the Town has received a grant for an engineering study to address flooding at the south end of Town on York Road. Chris V. shared with the Committee his call with Edie to discuss how to best coordinate the grant related efforts of both the CWQC and the new Resiliency Committee that Edie is chairing, focused on the various Hazard Mitigation programs such as HMGP and BRIC. There is a commitment to stay well-coordinated.

John R. and Chris V. will also work on exploring other grant options beyond the HM ones for the CWQC.

Water Quality: Chris V. reported on his various discussions with UD and State of DE groups at the UD Coast Day on 10/1/23. He will share some of the information he gathered on new approaches to measurement with Dave for further discussions and exploration with this subcommittee.

Dissolved oxygen is improving. However, it's warmer than last year so the levels aren't as good as 2022. Committee member John B. is experimenting with increasing flow to the dead-end areas of Petherton Canal. No clear data yet but will continue experimenting with this and report back at a later meeting. The Committee was encouraged to read the Tidal Pump study as addressing the lack of Tidal Flow in the Canal System is a top priority for the Committee to work on next along with the Dredging effort. More discussions will take place at a future meeting.

Other Committee Business: John B. and Chris V. had a call with the new CIB Executive Director Christophe Tulou and their community relations director Lisa Swanger on 10/5/23. Very informative session, with commitments to keep our groups informed on relevant matters.

Public Comment: No one was in attendance, so no discussions.

The next meeting will be on November 20, 2023 at 10:00am as a hybrid – in-person and Zoom. Members of the public are welcome. Reported by Chris Vanuga – Chairman