



Town of South Bethany Committee Report from January 29, 2024

Discussion around the continued interest of Town residents wanting to have their own Floating Wetlands, considering the update we received from Mr. Shaw that the Town Council voted to not allow any of the current Floating Wetlands to be adopted. We will follow up with the Town Manager to see how Residents buying and maintaining their own Floating Wetlands might be addressed, since there doesn't seem to be any guidance or provisions for this in the current Town Codes. This will also likely require some involvement from DNREC as well.

The Committee was briefed by Mr. Shaw on the status of the FY 24/25 budget process. We were advised that this would be a more challenging budget cycle due to projected reductions in certain fees and other revenue. So, we need to be prepared to potentially look for additional funding sources such as grants. The Committee asked Mr. Shaw to be kept updated on these discussions, as well as the opportunity to address any specific questions regarding our requests with Town Staff and Town Council.

The Committee once again discussed the need for continued maintenance support for the canals for trash and other clean-up beyond the Fall cleaning that is an outsourced contract currently. Mr. Shaw noted our current DPW does not have the ability to do this with current staffing levels. The idea of a voluntary resident program being initiated was brought up, and Mr. Shaw will discuss with Town Council and if there is support, to draft some new code language to allow. From discussions with the SBPOA, they aren't interested in collaborating to take on a Canal "watch" program like their Neighborhood Watch program currently. Without Town Staff or a Volunteer program in place, CWQC did submit in its FY 24/25 budget the cost for contracting with an outside company to routinely clean the canals during the May – September peak season, as this must be consistently done to mitigate degradation of canal water quality.

Suggestions from Committee members submitted for the Charter and Code update process will be submitted by Mr. Fisher to the Town for consideration.

To keep our efforts on Dredging planning going, we will be setting up a meeting with Fenwick officials to learn more about the process and hear their learnings to use in our efforts. As the expected cost of this project will be significant, we plan on putting together a separate funding request to submit to the Long-Range Planning ad-hoc Committee. We are also going to meet with the Grant Assistance Program team at the University of Delaware to get their support on grant options and possible applications. We will continue to coordinate any grant discussions with the Resiliency Committee.

Discussion around the inventory process that the Resiliency Committee is directing of stormwater drains by the Town staff. As this excludes drains from residential properties directly into the canals, this Committee is currently doing this inventory as well. We will provide this to the Town and Resiliency Committee when completed.

Regarding the development of a Master Canal Water Quality Improvement Plan, informal discussions with outside engineering firm support our intended scope. Cost estimates of \$75,000 to \$150,000 for this type of engineering report are a reasonable estimate. This would include cost and benefit estimates of any included initiatives (e.g. dredging, storm water management, tidal flow mitigation). For the FY 24/25 budget process the \$75,000 submitted is a cost share amount from the Town, with balance from grant(s) to-be-determined.

Mr. Wilson reviewed his analysis and report on the condition of the water in our Canals from all the water quality testing and collaboration with the University of Delaware. One of the observations is that the DO levels following the Algae Harvesting this past spring were better than the prior year's when there weren't any Algae Harvesting – suggesting a positive impact from our Harvesting efforts. Also results continue to support that the eastern canal ends' water quality is poorer than mid-canals and western canals. Discussion followed on engaging with DelDOT on frequency of cleaning out the Route 1 stormwater drains and the forebay at Anchorage. A follow-up with Town Manager would take place to reconfirm DelDOT timing and scope of their maintenance efforts.

Respectfully submitted,
Chris Vanuga, Chairman