



Town of South Bethany Committee Report from February 19, 2024

The proposed CWQC budget and the items that seem least likely to be approved due to current budget constraints were discussed. It was emphasized that finding matching grants would be an option we can pursue to fund some of the new efforts if they are not approved in the budget.

Aside from the question of funding, there was a discussion about alternatives to Envirotech as a provider of canal cleaning services. The Town would be interested in receiving bids from qualified vendors, but none have been identified.

In the continuing effort to pursue canal dredging for South Bethany, a meeting has been scheduled on March 4th to meet with the Fenwick Island chair of their canal dredging committee. The goal is to learn from their efforts, identify the key activities, and get a general idea of the costs involved in their project. Later in the meeting, it was agreed that once enough information is gathered, the necessary permits should be pursued, as they appear to take a long time to get all the required approvals.

One of the committee members has contacts with a person who organizes fund-raising events and has asked for a call to speak with this fundraiser about possible ways to raise funds for canal water quality efforts. A teleconference is to be scheduled.

It was agreed that an overall "master plan" that identifies the proposed CWQC efforts should be written. This includes developing the per-effort projected costs and timeframes that the long-term strategic planning group has requested. Aside from this discussion, it was mentioned that DNREC is proceeding with the White Creek/Assawoman Canal dredging, and it may be possible to get some data about what that ended up costing per unit of dredging.

Several canal water quality efforts (possibly even canal dredging) should be eligible for some matching grant level. To that end, a meeting will be set up with the Grant Assistance Program at the University of Delaware to discuss funding sources and types of activities eligible for such funding.

Spring canal algae harvesting is scheduled for May and will be completed before Memorial Day. At this point, an agreement with DNREC on the supply of a truck, driver, and disposal site has yet to be negotiated. A call with Jessie Hayden will be scheduled to discuss this issue. Without DNREC's agreement and commitment, the Solitude contract will have to be canceled, and we will have to go back and request that DNREC clean the algae from our canals.

Despite the cold weather, a new type of aquatic plant has been seen blooming in some of the canals. This is not the usual algae but a different variety. However, floating loose still presents a problem to boaters and it adds to the nutrient load in the canals when it dies. SBPOA will be informed about this and the projected spring canal cleaning date so they can notify their membership.

A proposal was put forward for a pilot demonstration to improve canal water quality in two problem canals by installing a pipe and pump to continuously circulate water from one canal to the other, using a small-diameter pipe tunneled between the two canals. This would improve water aeration and

circulation. This would probably require DNREC review and approval. This will be presented to the Town Council for consideration once additional details are defined and a rough cost estimate is established.

An inventory of existing home drains that feed into the canals was started but paused due to the cold weather (it was being made by boat in the canals.) This will be completed when the weather is more suitable. Where such bulkhead penetrations are identified, the intent is to ask the various owners if they are still actively used. This information will be provided to the Town Council about possible code violations. As a related discussion, the committee asked if the Town had bulkhead inspection records and, if so, if they might include such information. This question will be posed to the Town Manager and Town Code Enforcement Constable.

The committee has provided a set of code enhancements that we would like the Town to consider adding to the current code to eliminate homeowner/contractor sources of canal pollution. That committee will consider these changes in their upcoming meeting and potentially craft code change wording that Councilmember Shaw can bring to the Council for consideration.

Last summer's canal water quality reports (2023) have been updated to include accurate rainfall quantities. A fault in the Bethany Beach rain gauge equipment recorded inaccurate data. Water quality in 2023 showed definite signs of improvement, likely resulting from the Spring algae harvesting and the heavier-than-normal rainfall in July.

Respectfully submitted,
Chris Vanuga, Chairman