

**South Bethany Canal Water Quality Committee**  
**Meeting Conducted In-person and Zoom**  
**January 29, 2024**

Committee Members Present: John Beauregard, Chris Carlyle, Bob Fisher, John Roberts, Tim Shaw, Pete Trelenberg, Chris Vanuga, Dave Wilson

1. The meeting was called to order at 10:00 am
2. Minutes from the December 18, 2023 meeting was approved, with one minor update.
3. Town Council Update
  - a. Mr. Shaw updated the Committee that the Town Council voted not to allow any of the current Floating Wetlands to be adopted.
  - b. A request of the Committee was made to Mr. Shaw to inquire to see if the Town will allow property owners to buy and maintain Floating Wetlands on their own. As no code currently exists and there is likely some need for DNREC input, this would have to be fully explored. He will follow up on this.
  - c. Discussion also expanded to include seeking approval for other self-managed canal water quality efforts such as the oysters. Mr. Shaw will follow up on this as well.
  - d. Mr. Beauregard offered to take the lead on following up on both these matters.
4. Town Fiscal Year 2024/2025 Budget
  - a. 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. It will be finalized over the next 30 days.
  - b. Question raised as to what the potential impact would be on our budget from the discussions around the Community Benefit Agreement (CBA) draft regarding the funds to the coastal towns from the proposed Wind Farm off the Coast. Mr. Shaw advised that the Atlantic Coastal Town (ACT) members are collectively waiting on the final approval for the program before taking any action on the CBA multi-year funding offer(s).
  - c. The Committee asked Mr. Shaw to keep us updated on these discussions, as well as the opportunity to address any specific questions regarding our requests with Town Staff and Town Council.
  - d. Mr. Shaw reiterated that the Town Council was supportive of evaluating any proposals that include grant funds with co-share requirements.
5. Canal Maintenance Program
  - a. 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.

- b. 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. If there is, Mr. Shaw will draft some new code language to submit for consideration.
  - c. As one option, Mr. Fisher followed up with the SBPOA and confirmed they aren't interested in collaborating to take on a Canal "watch" program like their Neighborhood Watch program currently. There are challenges in getting enough volunteers for the Neighborhood Watch, and concerns about taking this on as well.
  - d. Mr. Vanuga noted that without Town Staff or a Volunteer program in place currently, CWQC did submit in its FY 24/25 budget the cost for contracting with an outside company to routinely clean the canals during the upcoming May through September peak season, as this must be consistently done to mitigate degradation of canal water quality.
6. Code Review and Input
- a. Mr. Fisher reviewed the final list of recommendations for improving the Town's Charter and Code to address ways to reduce, eliminate and otherwise improve the quality of the Canal water.
  - b. He will submit this version to the Chair of the Charter and Code Committee, Mr. Bob Biciocchi, for review and consideration following this meeting.
  - c. Committee discussion reiterated that it isn't enough to have the code, there also needs to be clear enforcement guidelines along with specific actions the Town can take in the event of violations that are meaningful.
7. Dredging
- a. 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. Mr. Vanuga will work with Mr. Carlyle to get this meeting scheduled.
  - b. As the expected cost of this project will be significant, the Committee plans on putting together a separate funding request to submit to the Town's Long-Range Planning ad-hoc Committee.
  - c. Mr. Vanuga will reach out to set up a meeting with the Grant Assistance Program (GAP) team at the University of Delaware to get their advice, counsel and support on grant options and possible applications. We will also continue to coordinate any grant discussions with the Resiliency Committee, including with GAP.
8. Stormwater Management
- a. Discussion around the inventory process that the Resiliency Committee is directing of stormwater drains by the Town staff. As it is our understanding that this excludes drains from residential properties directly into the canals, this Committee will continue to complete an inventory of these drains and pipes as well. The final inventory will be provided to the Town and Resiliency Committee when completed to add to their inventory effort.
9. Master Canal Water Quality Improvement Plan
- a. Mr. Vanuga updated the Committee on his discussions with an engineering firm with experience and knowledge of these types of studies along with the South Bethany canal system.

- b. The objective again would be on how we best synchronize various improvement efforts to get a clearer sense of both the potential impact and staging of the priority initiatives under consideration (e.g. dredging, stormwater management, tidal pump and code improvements and enforcement) to improve most feasibly the quality of our canal water and system.
- c. This would be a comprehensive study that would help guide the Committee and the Town on the next best actions, and that would leverage our data and recent studies such as the Woods Hole Group report.
- d. It was roughly estimated that a study of this type and scope would cost anywhere from \$75,000 to \$150,000. For the FY 24/25 budget request just submitted, \$75,000 was included for this study, with the assumption that if the cost was higher we would seek grants and/or other funding to co-share the costs with the Town.

#### 10. Water Quality Monitoring & Analysis Report Out

- a. Mr. Wilson reviewed his analysis and report shared with the Committee on the condition of the water in our Canals from all the water quality testing and collaboration with the University of Delaware. He will be following up with Mr. Ed Whereat from the UD oversight program for community testing to get his interpretation insights from the study as well. Mr. Wilson will report additional information and any updates at a future meeting.
- b. 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.
- c. Discussion followed on engaging with DelDOT on frequency of cleaning out the Route 1 stormwater drains and the forebay at Anchorage. Mr. Wilson reached out to get an update from DelDOT on the status, but hadn't heard back. Mr. Shaw noted that from the Town's discussions with them, no clean-out is scheduled as they deemed the forebay not requiring it at this time.
- d. The Committee requested that a follow-up with the Town Manager by Mr. Shaw take place to discuss a follow up with DelDOT to see if they would reconsider their timing and scope of their maintenance efforts.

#### 11. Public Comments

- a. Mr. Ray Saunders thanked Mr. Shaw and the Town Council for at least considering the adoption of the Floating Wetlands. He also thanked Mr. Trelenberg for his comments on the need for the Town Council and Town overall to prioritize additional maintenance and other improvement efforts of our Canals. Mr. Saunders offered a recommendation that the Town provide equipment that Town property owners could check out or borrow from Town Hall to help with volunteer cleaning efforts (e.g. nets, hooks) versus relying on residents to have and/or use their own. He also inquired about bulkhead maintenance and what was specifically in the code to address the poor state of certain bulkheads and their contribution to poor water quality. The Committee will follow up on this and report out in a future meeting.

The Meeting was adjourned at 12:02pm.