

**South Bethany Canal Water Quality Committee  
Meeting Conducted In-person and Zoom  
February 19, 2024**

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

The meeting was called to order at 10:00 am.

Minutes from the January 29, 2024 meeting were approved.

The meeting began with a discussion of the proposed budget and the items that seem least likely to be approved due to current budget constraints. The committee requested new line items for this coming year, which would increase the Town budget by \$100,000. A budgeting workshop is planned for Friday the 23rd when the council will establish a final budget. Again, it was emphasized that finding (matching) grants will be the best way to fund new efforts.

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.

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 to date.

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.

It was agreed that an overall "master plan" that identifies all of the proposed CWQC efforts ought to be written. This includes developing the per-effort projected costs and timeframes requested by the long-term strategic planning group. As an aside to 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 of the canal water quality efforts (possibly even canal dredging) should be eligible for some level of matching grants, and to that end, a meeting will be set up with the GAP group at the U of Delaware to discuss funding sources and types of activities eligible for such funding.

The spring canal algae harvesting is scheduled for mid-April 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 DNREC will be back on the hook to 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, harmless (and beneficial) organism. However, floating loose still presents a problem to boaters, and when it dies, it adds to the nutrient load in the canals. SBPOA will be informed about this and the projected date for the spring canal cleaning 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. Once additional details are defined and a rough cost estimate is established, the proposal will be presented to the town council for consideration.

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 our Town Manager and 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. Data on a fault in the Bethany Beach rain gauge equipment was recorded as inaccurate. Water quality in 2023 showed definite signs of improvement resulting from both the Spring algae harvesting and the heavier-than-normal rainfall in July.

As mentioned in the meeting notes from the previous month, an investigation was made into the potential benefits and problems associated with allowing homeowners to have private floating wetlands and/or oyster beds. The conclusion was that neither activity provided any benefits to water quality, and there were potential issues with legal liabilities and DNREC approvals. So, the committee is not recommending either of these options to the Town.

There was no public comment, either online or in person.

The Meeting was adjourned at 12:02 pm.