

South Bethany Canal Water Quality Committee
Meetings conducted In-person and Zoom
April 28, 2025

Committee Members Present: Chris Vanuga, Chair, John Beauregard, Town Council Liaison, Bob Biciocchi, Chris Carlyle, John Roberts, Pete Trelenberg, Dave Wilson

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

Minutes from the March 24, 2025, meeting were approved with one edit.

Mr. Biciocchi provided his Town Council Liaison update. We are still waiting to hear from Jim Sullivan from DNREC on the status of some of the grant opportunities we discussed previously. Following our discussion on potential water treatment considerations, he provided some information to the Town Council and will update them at their May 9th meeting. No action was requested, but we wanted to keep everyone informed and gather more input as we consider a potential pilot program. He also met with the Town Manager to gather additional background information on the prior efforts to treat the water with the support of DNREC. Discussions continue regarding the town budget; we await final review and approval. Finally, he has shared with the Town Council that we will provide an updated “state of the canals” report soon.

Discussion followed on several related matters. We asked Mr. Biciocchi to work with the Town Manager to get South Bethany on the DNREC/Solitude algae harvesting list for any second pass required. In addition to the “state of the canals” report, it was suggested that we bring locally knowledgeable and experienced experts to assist in its presentation to the Town Council. Finally, comments were made about concerns about these water treatment options, and we need to do lots more research and discussions with DNREC and other authorities as we consider options.

A reminder was shared that Solitude and DNREC's first algae harvesting will start next week on Monday, May 5th. While there is nominal algae presently, they will proceed to gather whatever they can.

The Submerged Aquatic Vegetation (SAV) program continues to be underway, with continued data monitoring. Additionally, widgeon grass “seed harvesting” will occur throughout our canals from May 27th through 30th. Additional volunteers are welcome. The Town’s April 17th newsletter included an overall update on this program, details on the seed harvesting, and how to get involved.

We discussed the potential for water treatment options a bit further. Mr. Biciocchi is awaiting a call back from Solitude with additional information on what is approved by DNREC and estimated costs for testing either of the two options in a pilot program in one or more canals. Once the information is received, we will discuss it further at a future meeting. A suggestion was made to do a much smaller “water bottle” type test of the treatment solutions with our

canal water. While small-scale, it would be a more controlled experiment. There was also the suggestion that, due to the newness of these treatment options in the inland bays, we help coordinate a joint “public-private partnership” between South Bethany, DNREC, and Solitude. Dr. Beauregard will be on point to gather some initial thoughts on this and report back in a future meeting.

Regarding support for the hydrodynamic modeling, we are still awaiting an update from the professor and program leader at Rowan University. We discussed the criticality of compiling examples of where this type of modeling has successfully supported similar efforts, as we are either underway with or considering here in South Bethany.

The main point from the discussion on grant funding is that due to all the National actions and the trickle-down impact on significant reductions in State, non-governmental, and non-profit funding, such as the Center for Inland Bays (CIB), the funding opportunities for South Bethany are somewhat limited now. Mr. Vanuga will follow up with both CIB and UD’s Grant Assistance Program (GAP) to obtain the latest updates and report at a future meeting.

Water quality updates: Testing has been increased to two times per month for April and will move to weekly in May throughout the season. There was a discussion around the continued challenges to our testing budget from the Town Council, but Mr. Biciocchi successfully provided the rationale to keep this in the budget. As we look forward to supporting this testing, we have asked Mr. Wilson to follow up with the Community Monitoring Program lead on other options to have these tests funded through the Program versus our Town budget. He will report back to us at a future meeting.

A quick update on the rain gardens was provided. Mr. Biciocchi followed up with the Town Manager to encourage this to be included in the Public Works budget and responsibilities as part of our overall maintenance efforts.

Public Comment: Mr. Ron Jackey spoke to the Committee and was interested in better understanding how to best deal with overgrown vegetation on adjacent properties, not only on his property but also in the canals. He wanted to understand what ordinances or other actions the Town might take, particularly regarding the impact on the canals. We advised that the only applicable ordinance we knew of was Code 104-12(b), but that he should speak formally with the Town Code Officer on this as well. If there are violations of this or other related codes, there are enforcement actions that he can take. These include remedying the situation at the expense of the homeowner of the vegetation.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:26 a.m.