

Town of South Bethany
Meeting Minutes for
Planning for Sustainability and Resiliency
Kickoff Meeting, May 15, 2025

The first Planning for Sustainability and Resiliency Meeting was held May 15th at Town Hall at 12:30 pm. The meeting was held in partnership with the University of Delaware, Institute for Public Administration and the Town of South Bethany. Mayor Dondero opened the meeting by introducing the presenters from the University: William (B.J.) DeCoursey, Dr. Jerome Lewis, Dr. Philip Barnes, Jennifer Reitz, Alex McClellan and Kylie Tugend. Brent Jett, PE, from George, Miles, and Buhr, LLC, was also present. Twenty-two residents were in attendance.

Mr. Jett began with a presentation on sea level rise and discussed its contributing factors. Two causes are the Gulf Stream slowing, which has resulted in less water being pulled off the coast, and more intense rainfall. Mr. Jett stated that Delaware is the lowest lying state in the United States, and Sussex County is the lowest lying county. He also indicated that for each \$1.00 spent on mitigation, \$13.00 is saved on clean-up. According to Mr. Jett, sea level rise is projected to increase between 1.18' and 1.73' by 2050. The intermediate scenario projects a sea level rise of 1.41' by 2050.

Dr. Barnes followed with a discussion on ways to protect the Town by using hard engineering (i.e. raise roads), changing physical infrastructure (i.e. dikes), and altering existing assets (i.e. raise items such as air conditioning units, increasing freeboard, etc.). Dr. Barnes also suggested avoiding the placement of assets in flood prone areas, creating nature areas in flood zones (i.e. Bethany Beach Nature Center), and the relocating assets (i.e. buying lots where flooding occurs and turning them into low impact use).

Survey results were provided, but it was noted that the results are from April 30, and the survey was going to remain opened until more residents had an opportunity to participate. The survey received 292 responses as of the date of the meeting. Representatives from the University were impressed with the number of respondents to date. Some of the suggestions residents would like to see investigated are limiting impervious surfaces; planting more native plants; spending Town funds to mitigate; and constructing living seawalls and earthen berms. Surprisingly 15% of the responses found no issues in flooding.

The presentation provided at the meeting will be posted on the Town's website. A future meeting discussing the final outcome of the survey and 'next steps', will be provided at a later date.

The meeting adjourned at 2:35 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia Van Horn, Chair
Community Planning Advisory Group