

South Bethany Canal Water Quality Committee
Meetings are conducted in person and on Zoom
July 21, 2025

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

The meeting was called to order at 10:03 am.

Minutes from the June 16, 2025, meeting were approved.

The liaison provided an update on a meeting with the mayor regarding a Rain Garden restoration plan for discussion and approval by the Council. The outcome was an agreement to arrange a meeting with the Town Manager and Facilities to review the plan submitted by CWQC and inspect a proposed Phase 1 of the Rain Garden Restoration project. Subsequently, the Liaison would report to the Chair and collaboratively prepare information for presentation to the August Council session for decision-making.

There was a discussion about incorporating rain gardens into the town's overall stormwater management plan, which is currently being developed. This will be included in future discussions and our update to the SBTC.

The liaison meeting with the mayor also clarified the plan for Solitude and OASE suppliers to meet with DNREC regarding the Phosphate treatment program. This program could potentially reduce algae blooms and the canal's bottom muck layers, which would decrease cleanup efforts and lower long-term maintenance costs for our canal network. If the B2G discussion concludes with DNREC showing interest, then SBTC could provide a pilot site to test and evaluate its effectiveness. Solitude scheduled the report-back meeting with the Town Manager for August 25.

The Chair reviewed the update on the 'State of the Canals' presentation, which will be shared with the Council soon. This aims to inform the Council about the design, causes, and corrective actions related to current and future canal conditions. CWQ discussed modeling canal water flow as needed to evaluate the benefits of increased circulation, stormwater treatment, vacuum dredging, additional forebay locations (both dry and wet types), and bulkhead heights. Recommendations were made to include alignment with other regional and statewide efforts, such as the watershed implementation program.

The Master Engineering Plan for the Canal Network and the surrounding ecosystem was again suggested by committee members as an essential step towards most projects.

Dr. Beauregard highlighted the need for more scientific understanding of the stormwater sources entering the canals to identify the main contributors to contamination. Mr. Wilson pointed out that the data shows the Petherton location as a significant source, for example.

The draft of the proposed ordinance updates for canal management of trees and shrub trimming, residential drains, and setbacks for new plantings was resubmitted to the Charter and Code Chair for review, but no response has been received.

Mr. Wilson reported on canal water measurements, noting that increased rain has lowered the water's salinity, which typically encourages algae growth. Still, we might be past the emergence season. Additionally, harvester activity could be effective in reducing algae emergence. The water clarity has been murkier due to more stormwater runoff.

The SAV program we are volunteering with to help DNREC measure water quality is ongoing and providing more data to better understand the organic health of the canal water, especially regarding oxygen-producing Widgeon grass.

There was no public comment, and the meeting was adjourned at 11:54 a.m.