

South Bethany Canal Water Quality Committee
Meetings are conducted in person and on Zoom
August 18, 2025

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

The meeting was called to order at 10:02 am.

Minutes from the July 28, 2025, meeting were approved.

Mr. Biciocchi provided his Liaison update. The Town Council has a workshop this coming Friday. Capital projects are a key topic area, and CWQC's prior submissions from last year were included for the discussions. Mr. Biciocchi will bring forth other updated items, such as the forebays. He is working to get us on the Town Council schedule for our "state of the canals" update report in the coming month or two, which will help support these requests. A new grant program was released on 8/1 by DNREC with a quick turnaround of 8/30. He discussed getting approval from the Town Council at the workshop due to the short timeline. Under consideration by the mayor, there is concern we may not be a good fit—follow-up discussion to be scheduled.

The overall quality of the canal water is much better than it was last year. The usual challenge areas, like remote dead-end canals, continue. As part of the UD Sea Grant program, some additional testing sites were added to the routine sampling and testing done by the outside laboratory this time. This is due to the unusual discoloration and foul smells observed throughout the canal system over several days. This was the same time as the reported sewer leakage in the adjacent bay. The preliminary results confirmed this was an "inversion" event, a natural occurrence due to water and air temperature changes with no relation to or observed impacts from the leakage.

A small group from CWQA met with the SAV program team onsite on July 28 to discuss the help they wanted in keeping the measurement devices clean during the study's September timeframe. An email was sent to this committee on 8/1. Mr. Trelenberg volunteered to provide additional support.

Dr. Beauregard provided an update on his efforts to assemble an initial draft of a possible submission to DNREC for the water quality grant RFP issued on 8/1. If the town council approves proceeding, he will need additional support from the team with data. The scope will be around the rain gardens. Mr. Trelenberg noted we need to get an update from the town manager and head of public works on their inventory and efforts to refurbish them, so we are in synch. Mr. Biciocchi will follow up with them.

As a follow-up to our submission of recommended code changes focused on canal water quality, Mr. Biciocchi was advised by the Code and Charter Chair to bring this directly to the Town

Council for consideration. Mr. Carlyle will draft a short note with our focused request for Bob to use in his communications.

Mr. Vanuga updated the committee on a meeting he had with Ms. Lisa Swanger from the Center for Inland Bays on a new water quality community education program called: Bays to Backyards. We will have Ms. Swanger present this to the committee at an upcoming meeting for consideration here in South Bethany.

The Committee spent time reviewing the draft of the State of the Canals presentation for the Town Council. There was good feedback and input on further refining to help strengthen the situation and near and longer-term priorities. There is a continued focus on the root causes of our challenges with water quality, driven by the structural layout resulting in poor tidal flow and flushing. A Hydrology and Hydraulics (H&H) engineering study remains the top priority recommendation for the next key action and should be included in the upcoming capital budget considerations. Prioritizing all the mitigating actions is too difficult without this insight and support for proper cost-benefit analysis. A final draft will be circulated before the confirmed date of the presentation.

Dr. Bruce Rodan, a resident of Bayshore, addressed the committee, complimenting the quality of the discussions and the efforts being made to improve water quality. He is retiring as a senior leader from the US Environmental Protection Agency at the end of this calendar year. He has offered to support the Committee where he can after that.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:00 pm.