

South Shore Estuary Reserve Council Meeting

July 26, 2022, 1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Hybrid Meeting

Town of Babylon - Town Hall

200 East Sunrise Highway

North Lindenhurst, NY 11757

Final Minutes

Attending:

NYS Department of State, Office of Planning, Development and Community Infrastructure

Nicole Jean Christian, Empire State Fellow

South Shore Estuary Reserve Office:

Jeremy Campbell

Sally Kellogg

Council Members:

Alison Branco, representing The Nature Conservancy

James Browne, representing Town of Hempstead Supervisor, Don Clavin

Adrienne Esposito, representing Reserve Council Citizens Advisory Committee

Peter Fontaine, representing Town of Brookhaven Supervisor, Edward Romaine

George (Chip) Gorman Jr., New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation

Rich Groh, representing Town of Babylon Supervisor, Richard H. Schaffer

Tara Schneider-Moran representing Reserve Council Technical Advisory Committee

Marty Shea, representing Town of Southampton Supervisor, Jay Schneiderman

Council Advisors:

Julia Socrates, NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, representing Commissioner Basil Seggos

Gregg Williams, representing NYS Department of Transportation Acting Commissioner, Paul A. Karas

Guests/Other Interested Parties:

Michael Bilecki, Fire Island National Seashore, NPS

Alexandra Caputo, Town of Babylon

Greg Gaxiola, Town of Babylon

Corey Humphrey, Suffolk County Soil & Water Conservation District

Lou Siegel, New York State Marine Educators Association

Lane Smith, NY Sea Grant

Welcome and Introductions

1:13 pm Meeting called to order.

J. Campbell thanked Town of Babylon for hosting. Introductions were made.

Town of Babylon – Overview of Implementation Projects and Recognition of 2022 Burt Koza Winter Brothers Poster Contest Winners

R. Groh presented on recent efforts made by Town of Babylon. In fall 2021, the Town of Babylon working with Save the Great South Bay installed the Bandolier Bandit litter trap to protect the Carlls River in the

Town of Babylon. The litter trap was funded/donated by Save the Great South Bay and Stormwater Systems. It was deployed on a tributary of the Carlls River and captures all floatables moving downstream to the river which eventually flows into the Great South Bay. Save the Great South Bay volunteers monitor the trap monthly and with assistance from Town staff, clear the trap.

The Carll's River Stormwater Treatment wetland project was funded by Governor's office of Storm Recovery with a total cost of \$3,000,000. The project goal was to help improve water quality and bolster resiliency for the area while mitigating downstream flooding. The project location is also prime trout habitat which will help contribute to improved local fish habitat.

Another completed project connected Babylon town hall park to sewers and helped with stormwater management. Previously, the park bathrooms had been on cesspools but no longer. The grant was for \$320,000 with a 50% match through the Suffolk County water quality improvement grant. This project improves water quality for Santapogue Creek. This project also involved completion of a pollution prevention plan for the Babylon highway yard. Two water quality grants were obtained to upgrade drainage in the highway yard, phase 1 is complete and phase 2 is currently underway. Babylon Department of Public Works and Department of Environmental Control have partnered to accomplish these goals.

The Carll's River Wetland Restoration project was accomplished in partnership with Suffolk County. A Suffolk County water quality improvement grant was obtained for \$120,000 with a 50% match. The Town used Posillico Wash Plant to recycle (low level concentration) contaminated material, over 2,400 tons was sent to the facility with additional material recycled through the Town's Solid Waste System. This project was spearheaded by 2 key Town staff.

Town of Babylon installed three SAV signs on Babylon Town beaches that highlight the benefits of eelgrass and identify the threats. This sign was created by Town of Babylon and DOS/SSER staff with input from the TAC. If interested in printing and installing this sign, please reach out to the SSER office. Town staff has gotten good feedback from the public since installation.

The Town rain barrel program has been very successful. Town makes the rain barrels and distributes to residents.

Supervisor Schaffer, Deputy Supervisor and Councilman Martinez, Councilmen McSweeney, and Town Clerk Compitello congratulated the 2022 Burt Koza Winter Brothers Poster Contest winners and presented them with their awards. The winning posters were shown to the membership.

Approval of Minutes from Meeting on October 14, 2021

Meeting minutes will be voted on at the October 2022 meeting.

South Shore Estuary Reserve Office Report

J. Campbell thanked the members for joining the meeting. He noted that Rachel Neville has moved on from her position at the SSER office, but the office will be rehiring for the position. Several projects funded through the SSER Local Assistance Grant Program have been completed which include:

- Town of Brookhaven SSER Eelgrass Restoration project planted 12,500 eelgrass shoots in Bellport and Moriches Bay.
- Freeport Community Development Association installation of catch basin inserts at multiple locations to improve water quality and reduce storm water pollution resulting from highway runoff into the estuary.

- Nassau County removed invasive water chestnut from Mill Pond in Wantagh and 150 Cubic Yards of material was removed last summer.
- Town of Hempstead also completed several projects including installation of a kayak launch point in Seamans Neck Park which is now a part of the South Shore Blueway Trail and other grant projects focused on ecosystem and species health, as well as tracking inundation levels of salt marshes due to sea level rise.

He also recognized some accomplishments made by council members over the last year which include but are not limited to:

- Town of Brookhaven installation of nature-like fishway installed at Sawn Lake, and the North American Wetlands Conservation Act grant received in partnership with Audubon New York to restore and protect seabird nesting habitat on Carters Island.
- Planning for a fishway at Bellmore Creek was also completed earlier this year and headed by Seatuck Environmental Association with funding from the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. This project looked at dam removal as an option however, it was decided to not be the appropriate decision for this spot.
- The Fire Island Wastewater Solutions Planning & Engineering Study was funded by Suffolk County Legislature in September 2021. The study will provide a new, detailed blueprint to manage the barrier island's wastewater and the draft plan should be out for public review in September 2022.
- Installation of litter trap to protect the Carlls River in the Town of Babylon.
- Long Island Traditions was awarded \$15,000 from the National Endowment for the Arts to support the exhibit "A World within a World: Bay Houses of Long Island."

The SSER office accomplishments were highlighted including Alewife surveying, monitoring for Horseshoe Crabs, helping with the Long Island Coastal Bioblitz, aiding in coordination of the Community Science Long Island webinar series, participation in A Day in the Life of a River, and helping create an eelgrass interpretive sign as noted previously. The office is engaged with Cornell Cooperative Extension of Suffolk County to develop a seagrass management and restoration project. The project will develop a model for restoration within the estuary and is looking at several parameters including temperature, light, and sediment. The contract has not yet been executed but will have a 5-year contract period.

2022 Comprehensive Management Plan (CMP) and Next Steps

The CMP is complete and was distributed to members. The final draft addresses all comments made and includes an appendices document. On August 9th the CMP will be voted on, the meeting invitation will be sent July 27th, 2022. Council members or designees can vote on this. After the CMP is adopted, the next step is to work toward an action plan which will be developed to designate more specific projects based on the CMP.

A. Esposito encouraged the development of an action plan which could help advocate for future funding.

South Shore Estuary Reserve - Technical Advisory Committee Report

T. Schneider-Moran noted that she and K. Fallon had started as chair and vice chair in January of 2022. There have been three meetings so far this year where the bylaws were updated, the mission statement was clarified, and membership was reviewed. Meeting topics included current seagrass research, eelgrass restoration efforts, updates from the SAV subcommittee, and saltmarsh habitat restoration. Additionally, some SSER local assistance grants have been presented at TAC meetings.

The TAC has created two subcommittees, the SAV subcommittee and the Coastal Ocean Acidification subcommittee. The SAV Subcommittee developed a draft SAV Action Plan, which has a goal of providing information about seagrass in the SSER, and to support the identification of actions to protect and restore seagrass in the SSER. The Action Plan summarizes the history of seagrass in the SSER, its current status, benefits of its presence, threats to eelgrass and the SSER's seagrass ecosystem, current work being done to help the species persist, and identifies actions to protect and restore eelgrass (*Zostera marina*) in the SSER. This draft document was developed with input from partner organizations, community representatives, and municipalities within the SSER, and Jeremy is currently working with other state agencies to finalize the document, before presenting it to the SSER Council for review, comment, and adoption, hopefully at the next council meeting in October. Additionally, eelgrass interpretive signs have been created with input from the TAC and have been installed in the Town of Babylon and are available if other municipalities are interested.

The Coastal Ocean Acidification subcommittee was formed following our June TAC meeting, in response to the request from the NYS OA Task Force for sentinel site recommendations for coastal Ocean Acidification monitoring in the SSER. This group is finalizing a draft document that was sent around to the TAC just yesterday, with hopes of submitting these recommendations to the NYS OA Task Force later this week.

South Shore Estuary Reserve – Citizens Advisory Committee Report

A. Esposito announced the 10% increase in the budget item for the SSER. However, one obstacle faced when speaking with legislators was the lack of name recognition of SSER. It was suggested that legislators be invited to SSER presentations to find out more about the program and a brief (4 pages at most) summary report be created to show what has been accomplished and how funding is being used. This would help advocacy groups when requesting additional funding and increase name recognition.

Council Member Updates and Roundtable Discussion

J. Campbell encouraged members to apply for wastewater funding grants specifically some that are hosted by Environmental Facilities Corporation.

R. Groh said that Town of Babylon is planning to restart their Earth Day program in 2023 which will now be held at the Carlls River Botanical Garden at Geiger Park.

T. Schneider-Moran spoke about a few Hempstead projects including the Black Skimmer count which is now using improved transmitters to track the local nesting colony, and the salt marsh restoration project that is being managed by J. Browne.

The meeting adjourned at 2:44.