

# South Shore Estuary Reserve Council Meeting

January 24, 2023, 1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Brookhaven Town Hall

One Independence Hill, Farmingville, NY

## Draft Minutes

### Attending:

#### NYS Department of State

Robert J. Rodriguez, New York Secretary of State

Erica Gonzalez, Deputy Chief of Staff

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

Kisha Santiago, NYS Department of State, Deputy Secretary of State

#### South Shore Estuary Reserve Office:

Jeremy Campbell

Sally Kellogg

Jacqueline DeFede

#### Council Members:

Alison Branco, representing The Nature Conservancy in New York

Cassandra Bauer, NYS Department of Environmental Conservation

James Browne, representing Town of Hempstead Supervisor, Don Clavin

Joe Febrizio, representing City of Long Beach Acting Manager, Donna M. Gayden

Peter Fountaine, representing Town of Brookhaven Supervisor, Edward Romaine

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

Maureen Dolan Murphy, representing Reserve Council Citizens Advisory Committee

Tara Schneider-Moran representing Reserve Council Technical Advisory Committee

Tom Wilson, representing SUNY School of Marine and Atmospheric Sciences, Dean Paul Shepson

#### Guests/Other Interested Parties:

Alexandra Caputo, Town of Babylon

Alan Duckworth, Town of Brookhaven

Adrienne Esposito, Citizens Campaign for the Environment

Kathleen Fallon, New York Sea Grant

Corey Humphrey, Suffolk County Soil & Water Conservation District

Amanda Kiernan, Town of Brookhaven

Mike Milano, Town of Brookhaven

Andy Mirchel, Save The Great South Bay

Daniel Panico, Councilman, Town of Brookhaven

Alex Romero, Fire Island National Seashore, National Park Service

Jim Tullo, Planning Commissioner, Town of Brookhaven

Anthony Valentino, Town of Babylon

#### Presenters:

Mary Arnold, Long Island Sound Study/New York State Department of Environmental Conservation

#### Welcome and Introductions

1:11 p.m. Meeting called to order.

**J. Campbell** thanked Town of Brookhaven for hosting. Introductions were made.

**SOS R. Rodriguez** greeted Council members. The updated Comprehensive Management Plan is an important document that is critical to the SSER. The Village of Patchogue just announced the start of one of the largest living shoreline projects in the State. This crucial project is addressing priorities, such as resilience, that were identified in the new document. Additionally, 2023 marks the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the passing of the legislation that created the SSER. Progress would not be made possible without the support and commitment of local partners and leaders. He thanked Council members and all who made this CMP possible and who dedicate themselves to the work of the SSER everyday, as well as state agency partners- DEC, Parks and DOT.

**J. Panico** greeted the Council.

### **Town of Brookhaven Update**

**P. Fontaine** provided updates on the ongoing work in the Town of Brookhaven. There are several projects located in the SSER, which increase resiliency, improve habitat, restore aquatic connectivity, and monitor shellfish populations. The Southern Mastic Beach Ecological Restoration project addresses sea level rise in the community through the purchasing of properties in the flood plain and their restoration to the natural landscape. This plan could be a part of FIMP, Brookhaven has been in contact with USACE about the project. The Restore and Protect Seabird Nesting on Carters Island project removed invasive species and installed nesting boxes to restore tern nesting area. Swan River Fish Passage constructed a nature-like fish way at Swan Lake in Patchogue which allows alewife access to important habitat upstream where spawning takes place. Alewife were found using the passage 1 month after it was complete. The Shellfish Management Program is mandated in town code but consists of clam and oyster stocking, a shellfish population census, and grow-out operations (annually 1.5 million clams and 1.5 million oysters). Eelgrass seeds can be grown out at the Brookhaven grow-out station. Eelgrass planting has occurred in Bellport Bay and Moriches Bay.

R. Groh commends Town of Brookhaven on Swan River Fish Passage project.

P. Fontaine commented that Brookhaven received a grant to study a fish passage on the Terrell River.

M. Dolan Murphy asked if there are any pilot programs on growing kelp?

P. Fontaine responded with yes, these projects take place at grow-out facilities and aquaculture permits are in the works. D. Panico noted that there is a site identified on the south shore for an additional grow-out facility if there was funding to support it. K. Santiago added that a project like this could be LWRP eligible.

### **Long Island Sound Study/New York State Department of Environmental Conservation- Long Island Nitrogen Action Plan Funding Finder**

**M. Arnold** illustrated the importance of finding funding opportunities as a municipality, especially for a smaller organization. The Funding Finder was developed by the NYSDEC in conjunction with the Long Island Sound Study. The purpose is to simplify the process of finding grant opportunities. The struggles that entities typically face while searching and applying for grants were outlined and there was a demonstration on how to best utilize the online tool. Currently it is available as a static download and will be updated regularly. The office is hopeful to someday have an online dashboard available, rather than a document. The Funding Finder and User Guide can be found at <https://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/103654.html>.

R. Groh asked what will be the flow of money from the Bond Act? A. Branco replied that the Bond Act is separate funding from the EPF however, it may flow through EPF funded programs.

### **South Shore Estuary Reserve Office Report**

**J. Campbell** welcomed and introduced new staff person of the SSER office, J. DeFede. Blue Carbon Seagrass contract was executed at the end of 2022 and has just completed its season one of monitoring. There will be a decision in February on how to get the SSER Action Plan started, with the goal to have it completed by December 2023. The Stewardship Award was announced, materials are being updated and are currently in progress with plans to make accessible by the next Council meeting and have an event in the fall. It is the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the legislature that passed and created the SSER. There is a 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary subcommittee, comprised of members from the CAC and TAC, currently working on creating a logo as well as a webpage that will be accessed through the DOS website and go live in February. The webpage will provide project highlights, accomplishments, a look ahead, and events. Input is welcome. Potential projects list is ready to go and demonstrates the need for funding in south shore. List will serve as a guide to direct funding.

R. Groh announced Town of Babylon Earth Day celebration on Saturday, May 6<sup>th</sup>, 2023.

A. Mirchel suggested signs that are visible from the roadways in places such as Swan River to indicate waterways. J. Campbell addressed a concern over who owns the roadway, as signs cannot just be placed anywhere. R. Groh recommended partnering with DOT.

### **South Shore Estuary Reserve - Technical Advisory Committee Report**

**T. Schneider-Moran** provided an update on the TAC, which has been reflecting on the previous round of Local Assistance Grants and the projects that were made possible with that funding. Presentation examples include, Town of Brookhaven boat ramp/stormwater mitigation project and Suffolk County salt marsh restoration efforts. A Salt Marsh Subcommittee was recently created within the TAC, additional volunteers welcome. The goal of the subcommittee is to create a prioritization map of saltmarsh habitat. The first subcommittee meeting is Friday, February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2023. Reminder that next TAC meeting is Tuesday, February 7<sup>th</sup> and the TAC End of Year Survey results will be reviewed. Thanked M. Bilecki, who retired in December 2022, for his service and wished him a healthy and happy retirement.

### **South Shore Estuary Reserve – Citizens Advisory Committee Reports**

**M. Murphy** announced the successful legislative breakfast hosted by Citizens Campaign for the Environment. Several legislators and stake holders were present. She recapped that SSER funding was \$900,000 for a long time and was recently bumped to \$1 million in 2021 but is asking for an increase to \$5 million. A sign on letter asking for this increase has been circulated to CAC members. Additionally, CAC members are interested in creating a SSER lobby day in Albany. The last CAC meeting had presentations from West Islip High School students discussing microplastics. She suggested creating a half day conference speaking about the past and celebrating what is next for the SSER to be hosted in the spring. Lastly, members were urged to submit potential projects to SSER staff, the projects will be used to create an Action Plan.

### **Council Member Updates and Roundtable Discussion**

**T. Wilson** spoke about the ongoing renovation at Flax Pond Marine Laboratory. He indicated that there is still space available for research scientists and encouraged individuals with project plans to contact him. He also announced the NY Chapter of American Fisheries is meeting February 8-10 at SBU.

**A. Romero** provided an update on Fire Island National Seashore funding and informed the Council of preliminary discussions about adding new term positions. He also encouraged Council members to spread the word about two vacant permanent positions at Fire Island National Seashore, Deputy Superintendent and Chief of Resource Management.

**C. Bauer** announced a job opportunity with DEC will be announced soon, Seagrass Coordinator.

**C. Humphrey** announced the fuel tank replacement program for agricultural users and the tire recycling program for agriculture producers, and the restoration of the soil health program for agricultural producers or municipalities. Interested parties should contact Corey. Lastly, he encouraged participation in the LI Envirothon on April 26.

**A. Branco** announced Seatuck is hosting the Long Island Natural History Conference on April 28.

**J. Febrizio** announced that many large projects are going on in Long Beach including the Long Beach Consolidation project, the north shore critical infrastructure protection project, and the offshore wind energy projects which will impact the City.

**R. Groh** announced a litter trip is funded and will be installed in Lindenhurst and an additional bandit will be installed in Geiger Lake Park. He reminded members that Town of Babylon Earth Day will be May 6<sup>th</sup> and noted some highlights and activities that will occur during the day.

**Approval of Minutes from Meeting on October 25, 2022**

**Motion** by R. Groh to approve the October 25, 2022 Council Meeting Minutes; seconded by P. Fontaine; carried.

The meeting adjourned at 2:46 pm.