

South Shore Estuary Reserve Council Meeting

April 18, 2023, 1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

National Park Service

Patchogue-Watch Hill Ferry Terminal

150 West Avenue

Patchogue, NY 11772

Final Minutes

Attending:

South Shore Estuary Reserve Office:

Jeremy Campbell

Sally Kellogg

Council Members:

Alison Branco, representing The Nature Conservancy in New York

Eric J. DeGrottolo, representing Town of Islip Supervisor, Angie Carpenter

Maureen Dolan Murphy, representing Reserve Council Citizens Advisory Committee

Greg Gaxiola, representing Town of Babylon Supervisor, Richard H. Schaffer

Robert Grover, representing Great South Bay Audubon

Shauna Kamath, representing NYS Department of Environmental Conservation

Tara Schneider-Moran, representing Reserve Council Technical Advisory Committee

Guests/Other Interested Parties:

Adrienne Esposito, Citizens Campaign for the Environment

Andy Mirchel, Save The Great South Bay

Bob Mozer, Adopt a Pond Project/resident

Jordan Raphael, Fire Island National Seashore, National Park Service

Presenters:

Anthony Caniano, Suffolk County

Sally Hecht, Suffolk County

Alex Romero, Fire Island National Seashore, National Park Service

Peter Scully, Suffolk County

1:08 p.m. Meeting called to order.

Approval of Minutes from Meeting on January 24, 2023.

Motion by A. Branco to approve the January 24, 2023 Council Meeting Minutes; seconded by M. Dolan Murphy; carried.

J. Campbell thanked Fire Island National Seashore for hosting. Introductions were made.

National Park Service - Fire Island National Seashore

A. Romero welcomed everyone to the Patchogue-Watch Hill Ferry Terminal. An overview of current park projects was provided including the deer management program, the threatened and endangered species program, potential issues with Right of Way utilities, how offshore wind could impact the park, and the dangerous marine life training that will occur on April 22. The park boundaries were stated. Fire Island National Seashore is the only wilderness area in New York and is the smallest in the US at 1,380 acres.

South Shore Estuary Reserve Office Report

J. Campbell noted the State budget had not yet passed but recapped the budget projections were between \$1.55 million and \$5 million which would be an increase from last year. It was also said that the first wave of Bond Act funding is coming through wastewater upgrades and drinking water infrastructure through EFC.

A. Esposito stated that the Governor announced a Bond Act listening tour but the Long Island dates nor format are not yet known. Also, the NYS Senate asked for how additional funding would be spent and the project list compiled by the TAC was used.

J. Campbell described SSER office accomplishments including engaging with USGS to draft an Action Plan for the SSER program which would list potential implementation projects. USGS gave a presentation on this effort at a recent TAC meeting. The Blue Carbon Eelgrass Restoration project is ongoing, monitoring equipment is being deployed for the current field season. The SSER office continues to monitor for Alewife and Horseshoe Crabs however, the program recently lost a staff person from the Hauppauge office. The SSER website has been updated and includes language celebrating the SSER's 30th Anniversary and the Stewardship Award should be announced shortly. J. Campbell is on the Ocean Acidification and shellfish restoration committees, sentinel sites for coastal acidification were submitted to the committee and the final report is not yet finished.

Suffolk County Clean Water Plan

P. Scully and A Caniano recapped the Suffolk County Subwatersheds Wastewater Plan (SWP). The main source of nitrogen, 70%, is from onsite septic systems. Most of the SSER is in the highest priority zone, priority area 1, and has a high residence time compounding poor water quality issues. The SWP calls for the allocation of over \$2 billion in funds to upgrade existing sanitary systems. Currently, about 3,000 systems have been replaced County wide.

B. Grover asked if legacy nitrogen was included in the model? A. Caniano responded no.

P. Scully described Suffolk County's Clean Water Mission. He recapped that in the 1960s it was recommended that the county have a sewer plan however that did not happen. To date there are still over 380,000 outdated cesspools in Suffolk County and 20,000 on commercial properties. The County has many new sewer projects under construction and in the pipeline. Nitrogen pollution compromises drinking water, pollutes bays and harbors, degrades protective ecosystems, impairs resiliency, which hurts local economies. The Suffolk County Clean Water Plan will restore and protect clean water by making infrastructure upgrades affordable for businesses and homeowners. To implement this plan two things must occur, 1- there needs to be an organizational structure required to administer the Plan and manage wastewater infrastructure projects and 2- a recurring source of funding is needed to serve as the "local match" for federal and state funding.

Sewer projects advancing in 2023:

Forge River Watershed (Phases I & II)	\$224 million
Carlls River Watershed (Babylon and Wyandanch)	\$157 million
Kings Park Business District (Smithtown)	\$25 million
Central Islip Downtown Revitalization Initiative	\$12.1 million
Huntington Station Hub Revitalization Area	\$70 million

Projects that need funding:

Oakdale (Phase I)	\$102 million
Holbrook	\$10.91 million
West Islip	\$37 million
Deer Park	\$346 million
Smithtown Business District	\$90 million
Port Jefferson Station Hub	\$50 million
Mastic Beach Revitalization Area	\$32.5 million
Centereach- Selden Commercial Corridor	\$143 million
North Bellport	\$37 million

It is proposed to fund the Clean Water Infrastructure Fund for sewers and clean water septic systems by utilizing an additional 1/8th of a penny of sales tax, resulting in over \$3 billion. The benefits of this approach include no increase in property taxes, no new fees, visitors (not just residents) contribute much of the revenue to the fund, 1/8 cent is nearly invisible to consumers, and the impact is 12 cents on a \$100 purchase. Additionally, Suffolk's Clean Water Plan will consolidate 27 sewer districts and restructure sewer fees to reduce costs, streamline investments, stabilize sewer rates, prevent large fee increases, and ensure all residential users pay the same amount for the same service. Funds can only be used for water quality improvements in Suffolk County. Next steps to implement the Suffolk County Clean Water Plan requires approval first from elected officials and then local voters. P. Scully asked the Council to help ensure Suffolk County voters get the chance to vote on the Clean Water Mission and asked members to urge New York State leaders to include the 'Water Quality Restoration Act' in the state budget.

South Shore Estuary Reserve - Technical Advisory Committee Report

T. Schneider-Moran provided an update on the TAC. The TAC members were surveyed, and members expressed preference for hybrid/remote meetings going forward. There were two meetings since the last Council meeting. The TAC has continued to highlight the projects that were funded by the SSER Local Assistance Grants, including Town of Hempstead's Community Oyster Restoration Effort and Living Shoreline project, which focused on shell collection from local restaurants to be used in local oyster reef restoration efforts and the Village of Patchogue living shoreline project which is currently under construction. Additionally, there was a presentation from SUNY Stony Brook about the New York Sea Grant Eelgrass Blue Carbon Storage Research Project, which looks to quantify the carbon sequestration stocks, sources, and accumulation rates of eelgrass in the south shore and Peconic estuaries. The TAC is eager to help with the SSER Action Plan which will hopefully use the already identified priority projects that the TAC membership created.

South Shore Estuary Reserve – Citizens Advisory Committee Reports

M. Murphy announced the next meeting will be remote on May 9 with USGS presenting on the Action Plan and Seatuck discussing the Long Island Water Reuse Plan. The Stewardship Award should be released shortly, and Council members were encouraged to share and participate in the nomination process. The 30th Anniversary Conference will be June 21st.

Council Member Updates and Roundtable Discussion

A. Mirchel spoke about Save the Great South Bay's research project that has a goal of showing successful shellfish ecosystem recruitment, and the upcoming speaker series that will be May 5th, 2023.

A. Branco announced Seatuck is hosting the Long Island Natural History Conference on April 28th, 2023 which is sold out for in person tickets but online registration is available.

R. Groh reminded Council members that Town of Babylon Earth Day celebration is on Saturday, May 6th, 2023.

A. Esposito said the Fire Island Sewage Solutions Plan is almost done and there will be a 30-day comment period.

B. Moser recapped his mission of monitoring freshwater ponds and asked Council members to keep this project in mind as it needs funding and resources.

J. Campbell encouraged members after today's meeting to visit the living shoreline at Shorefront Park that is under construction and noted the next meeting will be July 18th, 2023.

The meeting adjourned at 2:50 pm.