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City of Norwalk Mayor's Water Quality Committee Meeting September 3, 2020 Minutes

CALL TO ORDER 6:03 PM

ATTENDANCE

Members: Joe Schnierlein, Pete Johnson, Chris Malik, Steve Bartush, John Romano, Dick Harris, Geoff Steadman, Jim Bartley, Louise Washer, John Crespo

Staff: Thomas Closter

Guests: None

MEETING HELD BY ZOOM

PUBLIC COMMENT

None

MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

Motion to Approve by Jim Bartley, second by Dick Harris. Unanimous Vote.

DISCUSSION

- 1) Chairman Schnierlein discussed an inquiry to him by a Silvermine resident regarding a sewage spill in the harbor. He checked the CTDEEP's Bypass and CSO Events Public Viewer Website and found no issues. Anthony Carr, Chief of Operations and Public Works, stated in an email that there are small isolated spots of an unknown sheen which contained bubbles, leaves, etc. These materials are not characteristic of a sewage spill. This discharge may be attributed from the collection of inland organics entering the waterway, especially after prolonged dry periods, or another possible non sewage substance. WPCA and DPW have not observed any active sewage leaks.
- 2) Chairman Schnierlein said he and John Romano have received emails from Rick Reardon regarding concerns that 21,000 gallons of leachate per day are generated and may be leaking into the Norwalk River from Oyster Shell Park. Chairman Schnierlein contacted Kristin Derosia-Banick from the Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Aquaculture and she stated the shellfish and water are tested and monitored and there is no indication of any issues.
- 3) Chairman Schnierlein said there has been no communication with Eversource and their plans for the transmission line relocation project. Committee members are still very concerned about the path and method. There also has been no recent communications with DEEP.
- 4) Louise Washer gave an update on the plans to raise the Grupes Reservoir Dam in New Canaan. There will be an Online Public Hearing on September 29, 2020 @ 3:00pm regarding the First Taxing District dam safety permit. The dam was built in 1871 and is in need of repair. The plan includes removing over 400 native trees and shrubs along 1500 feet of riverbank in order to build a series of walls and berms

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along the eastern riverbank. There are concerns that the potential negative environmental effects of removing the vegetation from the riverbank and disconnecting the wetlands of Browne Sanctuary from the Silvermine River have not been included for review.

- 5) Louise Washer also discussed signing on to support Public Act 12-11 which is the sewage right to know law. Creating an electronic sewage spill reporting system and laying the groundwork for an electronic public warning system for raw or partially treated sewage discharges that enter into waters of the State.
- 6) Dick Harris said that rainfall from May through August this year was at 11 inches compared to 25 inches of rainfall last year and combined with the high water temperatures, low flow and low dissolved oxygen explains the dead menhaden in the river for the last few weeks. Harbor Watch has been trolling the last few weeks and have been seeing low numbers of bottom fish.
- 7) Tom Closter said the Mayor has declared a Water Emergency effective September 5, 2020 and will remain in effect until reserves reach an acceptable level. There is an irrigation schedule in effect from September 5 to October 31, 2020. Unlawful activities that are prohibited during the Water Emergency are sprinkling, watering, or irrigating shrubbery, trees, lawns, grass, and ground cover. Washing vehicles, driveways, pavement, porches or other outdoor surfaces.
- 8) Geoff Steadman talked about organizing a zoom meeting for the Norwalk River Watershed Initiative.
- 9) Next meeting scheduled for Thursday, October 1, 2020 at 6:00pm (Zoom)

Motion to adjourn meeting by Dick Harris, second by Pete Johnson 6:45pm

Minutes by Thomas Closter