

**CITY OF NORWALK
MAYOR'S WATER QUALITY COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING
JULY 1, 2021**

ATTENDANCE: Joe Schnierlein, Chair; Jim Bartley, Steve Bartush, Dick Harris, Pete Johnson, Diane Lauricella, Christopher Malik, John Romano, Geoff Steadman

OTHERS: William Mooney, Health Department.

This meeting was conducted by Zoom Teleconference.

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Schnierlein called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m.

ROLL CALL

There was a quorum present.

COMMUNICATIONS

DEEP – No report.

Dept. of Transportation via Shellfish Comm. – No report.

Dept. of Aquaculture – Mr. Bartush said that it is expected that there would be some harmful algae bloom surveys being done over the summer by the Department of Aquaculture.

Dept of Health – Mr. Mooney said that he would try to have some extra funding allocated for the survey that the Water Quality Committee has been discussing.

Harbor Commission – Mr. Romano said that there were strong concerns about all of the outfalls into the river and Harbor. This is something that needs to be address since it has been over 30 years since the last survey was done. A number of previous problems were addressed because of that survey. He mentioned that the Harbor Commission, Shellfish and Water Quality were not consulted when the mall was approved. While that issue was more for the Water Quality and Shellfish Commissions, the Harbor Commission supportive both of them.

Ms. Lauricella suggested that the Harbor Commission look into CEAC meeting. She said that Mr. Ireland schedules the meetings when there are major developments.

Mr. Steadman said that when the mall went in, the referral to the Harbor Commission was overlooked. Discussion followed about the weak points in the procedures, updating the list of storm drains. and the details about the data collection.

OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business to consider at this time.

NEW BUSINESS

• Mission Statement from Jim Bartley and Geoff Steadman

The purpose of the Norwalk Mayor's Water Quality Committee is to objectively analyze the waters of Norwalk Harbor, and to suggest measures to protect and improve the quality of its waters. Findings and recommendations formulated by the Committee, shall be shared with all appropriate City agencies/commissions, notably the Norwalk Harbor Commission and the Norwalk Shellfish Commission, who act as the regulatory guardians of Norwalk Harbor. In addition to ongoing communications with the aforementioned parties, the committee shall provide an annual report and recommendations of their findings.

Mr. Bartley explained that he and Mr. Steadman had worked on the mission statement earlier in the day.

Mr. Steadman said that he had located the minutes from the 1990 and 1991 Water Quality. He said that the first report was presented in 1993. The idea was to collect data, not single out any individual.

Discussion followed about the language of the mission statement and the possibility of including the Conservation Committee. The Commission agreed to include the Norwalk River Watershed in the Mission Statement.

The draft of the Mission statement was as follows:

The purpose of the Norwalk Mayor's Water Quality Committee ¹ is to objectively analyse the waters of Norwalk Harbor and its watershed, provide a continuing forum for discussion of water quality issues, and to suggest measures to protect and improve the integrity of its waters. Findings and recommendations formulated by the Committee, shall be shared with all appropriate City authorities/agencies/commissions, notably the Norwalk Harbor

Commission and the Norwalk Shellfish Commission, who act as the environmental guardians of Norwalk Harbor. While pursuing its mission, the Committee shall be guided by the water quality provisions established in the Norwalk Harbor Management Plan, Norwalk Shellfish Management Plan, and other duly established city, state, and federal laws, regulations, ordinances, and plans. In addition to ongoing communications with the aforementioned parties, the committee shall provide an annual report and recommendations of their findings.

❶ The Mayor's Water Quality Committee was established as an advisory body in 1990 upon the recommendation of the Harbor Management Commission.

• Review of Recommendations to be passed on to Harbor Commission, Shellfish Commission Planning and Zoning, Health Dept., Water Dept., Dept of Public Works. Etc.

Mr. Schnierlein explained that he had compiled a list of concerns over the past year.

a) Eliminate all PFAS and PFOS from drinking water either by filtration, drilling new wells or better collection of rain water.

b) Provide drinking water that does not contain sediments/dirt in it

c) Reservoirs must be able to store enough drinking water for growing population's demand during dry periods. This means possibly making them deeper, wider or longer. Deeper is the best option as the surface area of water will remain the same and less water will be lost during evaporation.

d) Reduce growth rate of Norwalk so water supply, sewage treatment and other City services are not strained.

e) Where ever possible, create a buffer zone between roads and buildings and water. 50+ feet or more would be ideal.

f) Where ever storm drains enter Norwalk's water, even if on private land, they must comply with city and state standards and permitting process.

g) Set up a water quality monitoring station that is capable of monitoring temperature, dissolved oxygen, salinity, turbidity and nitrogen 24 hrs. a day and data is downloadable from a website real time by anyone. This station should be able monitor surface water (1 meter) and bottom water (1/2 meter).

h) Hire two interns to walk, paddle, or use drone surveillance to identify and map shoreline drains in Norwalk visible during low tide. The last time this was done was 1991.

i) Collect water samples from storm drains that have not been previously tested and have them tested for bacteria, as well as other harmful ingredients that might be detrimental to humans and aquatic life.

j) Continue testing the drains that have been identified as problem drains, and have the bacteria tested for whether or not it is human or other source (avian, rodents)

k) Eliminate all construction, homes and buildings in all areas designated as flood prone areas.

l) Ensure adequate tree canopy in Norwalk, especially along waterways as the trees help stabilize banks and keep the water cooler, thus helping keep dissolved oxygen in the water.

m) Expand the Health Dept. Lab to do more environmental testing

n) Anything else.

Mr. Schnierlein asked if the Health Department Lab would be able to help with some of the testing. Mr. Mooney said that the Health Department was considering closing the lab due to some issues. All the lab work would have to be done by Harbor Watch. Mr. Harris said that closing the lab would be a serious mistake.

Mr. Steadman and Mr. Harris both cautioned the Committee that some of the recommendations were beyond the scope of the Harbor Commission, the Water Quality Committee and the Shellfish Commission. Mr. Harris suggested a committee be formed.

Mr. Steadman said that the Harbor Commission had worked very hard to get the DOT and DEEP to acknowledge the run off from the I-95 bridge and felt that they should be working on legislation so that all of the towns will deal with this.

Ms. Lauricella said that she would like to see the items grouped in subject content like drinking water and also include land use, landscaping and green infrastructure. She added that legacy sites around the Harbor should be included.

Discussion followed.

Mr. Malik said he would like using the phrase “Norwalk Harbor and watershed” that doing microbial tracking is not easy to do. He added that a Storm Water Authority that would collect taxes to improve storm water run off.

Mr. Schnierlein suggested creating a committee and this was agreeable to all. Mr. Schnierlein asked who would be on the Committee. Mr. Bartush, Mr. Steadman, Mr. Harris, Mr. Romano and Ms. Lauricella indicated that they were interested in participating on such a committee.

Mr. Schnierlein asked who would be the chair of the subcommittee. Ms. Lauricella said that she would be willing to co-chair.

Mr. Schnierlein said that Mr. Harris had done some water sampling at Harborview north of Wilson Avenue, near the marina. Mr. Harris said that they tested 8 stations. They did not see any outflow pipes. The bacteria was in the thousands, particularly when they were moving north. He said that he would be speaking with the Health Department and the Chairman of the Shellfish Commission.

Mr. Harris said that he had also taken some samples for metals. Those will be sent in for analysis. Mr. Schnierlein pointed out that Rowayton School is near a pond that empties into Farm Creek and the water often tests positive for avian bacteria.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

There was no one present from the public that wished to comment.

READING AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM JUNE 3, 2021.

Ms. Lauricella said that she did not recall saying that she would send documentation about Wilson Cove, but would send the documentation to the Committee members.

**** MR. JOHNSON MOVED THE MINUTES OF JUNE 3, 2021.**

**** MR. BARTUSH SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF JUNE 3, 2021 AS CORRECTED PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

NEXT MEETING TENTATIVELY AUGUST 5, 2021 OR CANCEL?

This was not discussed.

ADJOURNMENT

**** MR. JOHNSON MOVED TO ADJOURN.**

**** MR. BARTUSH SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 6:59 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

S. L. Soltes
Telesco Secretarial Services