

**CITY OF NORWALK
MAYOR'S WATER QUALITY COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING
FEBRUARY 4 , 2021**

ATTENDANCE: Joe Schnierlein, Chair; Jim Bartley, Steve Bartush, John Crespo, Dick Harris, Diane Lauricella, Pete Johnson, Chris Malik, Geoff Steadman, Louise Washer

OTHERS : Tom Closter, Director of Environmental Services; Dr. Sarah Crosby, University of Connecticut; Peter Lindereth, Save the Sound Water Quality Director; Bill Lucey, Long Island Soundkeeper; Dr. Jamie Vaudrey, Department of Marine Sciences, University of Connecticut; Elena Colon, Save the Sound Environmental Analyst; Jim Bartley

This meeting was conducted by Zoom/Teleconference.

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Schnierlein called the meeting to order at 6:07 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Mr. Closter announced that a quorum was present.

COMMUNICATIONS

- **DEEP** – Mr. Malik gave a brief update.
- **Eversource** – No report.
- **Dept. of Transportation via Shellfish Comm.** – No report.
- **Dept of Health** – No report.

OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business to consider at this time.

NEW BUSINESS

1. **Save the Sound - their protocols as well as their standards for evaluation.**

Mr. Schnierlein said that they would like to find out what Norwalk could do to improve their grade.

Mr. Linderoth, the Save the Sound Water Quality Director, thanked the Committee for this opportunity to address the Committee. He explained that the Long Island Sound Water Quality Report Card existed before the Save the Sound took it over.

Mr. Schnierlein said that when the report came out in 2021, the report was based on data gathered in 2019. He said that having the title adjusted to reflect the fact that the data was three years old.

Mr. Schnierlein said that it was his understanding that an estuary was not normally hypoxia. Mr. Harris agreed. Dr. Vaudrey said that historically, in the 1930's, hypoxia was not a normal state for estuary. Mr. Schnierlein said that during some of the 24 hour monitoring, when schools of menhaden passed the data recorders, the oxygen levels dropped significantly.

Discussion followed about sediment reconditioning and tracing the hypoxia back to the sources. Mr. Harris said that one major factor is that the Harbor does not flush due to the lack of salt marshes.

Ms. Lauricella asked what affect reducing the amount of impervious surfaces and putting in more plants to lower the water temperature around the Betts Brook area.

Mr. Lucey said that if they were able to reduce the strain the on system via storm water management and reduction of nutrients it would improve the temperature. Many of the upriver towns are developing right on the banks of the Norwalk River and there are other sewage treatment plants in upriver towns.

Ms. Lauricella suggested that having some changes in the land use policies towards green infrastructures.

Mr. Lucey said that creating living shorelines would help stabilize the situation. Porous pavement and storm water retention being used the water for flushing toilets in large commercial buildings will move things forward. Making it easy for the various towns to comply is also a consideration.

Mr. Schnierlein pointed out that they have a navigable harbor, which requires dredging. This removed many of the macrophytes. There are also shellfish rakes that drag along the bottom.

Mr. Crespo displayed photos of schools of menhaden in the Inner Harbor, which indicates the water is not dead.

Dr. Vaudrey explained that an F grade does not mean the water is completely barren but simply in need of restoration. They would like to have the Inner Harbor open for shell fishing and allowing people to safely fish in the Inner Harbor.

Mr. Schnierlein said that he had received many calls about the fact that residents had seen the report and disputed the fact that the Harbor was considered “dead”. He suggested that they somehow communicate their definitions to the public because the F grade does not make Save the Sound look good.

Mr. Harris said that he agreed with Mr. Schnierlein. The discussion moved to the rating for water clarity and the fact that the Inner Harbor got an F grade while the Middle Harbor was graded as a B minus.

Mr. Schnierlein said that in the 1920s, there were bay scallops in the water and eel grass in a particular location.

Mr. Lacey said that they want to have the water quality to be the best possible. If the various suggestions Ms. Lauricella made were implemented, they could get to the point where they were seeding some areas with eel grass.

Dr. Vaudrey said that getting shellfish back into the Harbor would be excellent. Mr. Schnierlein said that Mr. Bloom had been monitoring the water quality.

Mr. Steadman asked how long they had been monitoring the water quality in Norwalk Harbor. Mr. Linderoth said that they had been working on this since 2018-19.

Mr. Steadman suggested that Save the Sound work with the Shellfish Commission, the Water Quality Committee and the Harbor Management in the future. He explained that the significant run off from the I-95 bridge would now be captured and filtered from the bridge drains rather than being funneled directly into a outflow pipe opening onto the Norwalk River.

Mr. Steadman asked for more details about the DEEP Bay modeling. Dr. Vaudrey gave a brief overview about the scope of the project.

Mr. Steadman said asked what the status of the DEEP’s Waste Water Treatment Plant issue. Dr. Vaudrey said that she did not know. Mr. Lacey said that they were still involved with discussions with Norwalk. Mr. Steadman asked if they had requested an adjudicated hearing. Mr. Lacey said that he did not want to address that unless the DEEP lawyer was present.

Mr. Lacey then spoke about steps that the Norwalk WPCA was currently taking. He added that the NHMC had fought so hard on the I-95 outfall that they had set a precedent for the State. Norwalk’s effort may be the model for all the bridges across the State. The

heat map that indicated the pollution levels above the bridge and below the bridge was very helpful.

Mr. Malik said that Norwalk had also set a precedent with limnology.

Mr. Schnierlein thanked Mr. Linderoth, Dr. Vaudrey, Ms. Colon and Mr. Lucey for their presentation. He said that the Committee appreciated their time.

2. Dick Harris – water sampling during bridge work that he has done.

Yes, there is good news in this world.

Mr. Harris said that regarding the railroad bridge, he had shadowed the contractor to determine their quality of work with heavy metals. He was pleased to report that they worked only during incoming tides and the boom curtains went all the way to the bottom. Mr. Harris then reviewed the test results from the contractor. Mr. Schnierlein said that he would like Mr. Johnson and Mr. Peter to receive copies.

3. Diane Lauricella – City budge pertaining to water quality.

Mr. Schnierlein asked Ms. Lauricella to put her information into an email. She said that the Operating and Capital Budget discussions were underway. She said that working on an green infrastructure proposal for DPW would be timely.

Mr. Lucey said that there was some bonding funding available. DEEP has been doing a good job in tracking this.

4. John Crespo and what he is seeing from graphing the DOT sondes' data.

No report at this time.

5. Anything else?

There was no additional business to consider at this time.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

There was no one from the public that wished to address the Committee at this time.

READING AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES

• January 7, 2021

The minutes of January 7, 2021 will be considered at the next meeting.

Next Meeting

The next scheduled meeting is on March 4, 2021.

ADJOURNMENT

**** MS. LAURICELLA MOVED TO ADJOURN.**

**** MR. HARRIS SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 7:12 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

S. L. Soltes
Telesco Secretarial Services