

MEETING OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
SPECIAL CALLED MEETING
BETHEL FIRE DEPARTMENT
July 14, 2026

Members of the Board Present: Mayor Carl Wilson, Mayor Pro-Tem Camilla Griggs, Commissioner Cassandra Conger, Commissioner Elvis Jones, Commissioner Thomas Lilley, Commissioner Fred Whitehurst

Members of the Board Absent: None

Staff Present: Interim Town Manager, D. Scott Elliott, Town Attorney, Keen Lassiter, and Clerk, Linda Sheppard

Constituents: Chase Colson, Raymond Little, Maggie Sharp, Joe Peel, Kelli Peel, Heather Garrett, Earl Harris, Tyler Keen, Travis Rogerson, Casey Rogerson, Michael Holmes, Jerome Coward of Carolina Earth Movers, Ben Williams and Scott Godefroy of Rivers and Associates, Inc.

Mayor Wilson called the meeting to order to discuss the on-going Stormwater Canal Project at 6:00PM.

Stormwater Relocation Project Discussion:

Interim Town Manager gave an update on using Farmville's Public Works Department to assist with blowing out some of the Town's stormwater laterals.

Mayor Wilson described what he noticed after the last major rain event. He observed that the water flowed better with two areas still needing attention.

Interim Town Manager, Scott Elliott, stated that the latest work Rivers and Associates is doing from the last meeting that was held, was to design the canal relocation between Cherry Street and Robinson Street. Eleven properties were identified that the Town needed to work with to obtain easements on their property to do the work needed to the canal. Letters were sent to all eleven of these property owners to invite them to this meeting.

Scott Godefroy, Rivers and Associates, presented a map of the previously approved clean out process to address the finishing on cleaning the east-west canal (Attachment A). They have completed all the filed survey work and are trying to locate everything appropriately. One of the things that our surveyor, Patrick Hartman, brought to his attention referring to Cherry Street, Cecil Street and Robinson Street and the current ditch line going through from Cherry Street, which has been cleaned out to a point located on the map, dealt with property ownership. The thought process was basically straightening one pipe out and come directly down to the other pipe, straightening another pipe out, and then get a new path. One of the things that Hartman brought up to him was that all these properties on both sides are owned up to the ditch top. The other part is separate and possibly not conveyed to the adjoining properties. Originally presented

to Board before, was the idea to try to cut a new ditch, fill this one back in to give some buffer with double pipes and take all the trees out in that area. Later they thought to keep the pipes, preserve the ditch and put some kind of diverter in the discharge of the pipes so it would straighten and move the flow down. The new ditch grade would be basically flat with a minimal grade no matter what is done. The new thought would be to have it a little further down and still come out and straighten it up. They want to try and keep it from meandering as much as possible. They can create a curve to control it by using riprap.

Commissioner Jones asked a question about the ownership of the property in yellow on the map.

Attorney Keen Lassiter responded that they have done title work for 9 of the 11 parcels that only included the current owners and who the easement information should be addressed to. Two more properties will have title work down. After more discussion with the Town Manager, it has been determined that some more research needs to be done to determine who owns the ditch.

Interim Town Manager asked Scott Godefroy to address how the cost could be reduced if they do not have to replace those pipes.

Scott Godefroy responded that they probably could replace the pipes going in the right direction. It would be best if they did pull these pipes and straighten it out, and if the Town chose to orient the new ditch, a little differently, they might be able to still leave the pipes in place. So it would divert flow coming out of it more directly.

Mike Holmes, a Bethel citizen, spoke about the road work being done and the clogs under the road in the existing pipes.

Jerome Coward, Carolina Earth Movers, explained what he cleaned out on Cherry Street and that a blockage was found.

Scott Godefroy suggested that they would like to upsize to 30-inch pipes but can't find the inverter yet.

Jerome Coward spoke about the waterline being exposed and damaged and was not able to put in riprap. But once the pipes are cleaned out the water will be able to go through.

Scott Godefroy said that it looks like the existing water line is on top of the two pipes.

Mike Holmes talked about how storms affect the individual properties.

Commissioner Lilley discussed Hunter's yard where the ditch stops and about flooding on James Street and McWhorter Street.

Scott Godefroy said they looked at that area, and the ditch does need to be cleaned and there is another set of pipes there.

Commissioner Lilley said that there is a dead end there and that's what causes the flooding in his yard.

Scott Godefroy said they are trying to work with the drainage district.

Commissioner Lilley had permission from the Town to clean it out, but the field was planted with crops before he had a chance.

Scott Godefroy said that they are a foot and a half in and can get it to flow but it may be a little backed up at the end. But then you have the issue of whether to straighten it out.

A citizen explained water in the ditch never really flows and then evaporates but doesn't think the problem is the ditch.

Scott Godefroy explained that it is as flat as it can be and once you get to the end and dig out some debris it's still going to be a foot and a half of water unless the drainage district can do something about it.

Mike Holmes said that the water has nowhere to flow even if the pipes are enlarged.

Travis Rogerson said that the drain problem was coming from the other street.

A citizen asked does James Street flow into that ditch.

Scott Godefroy responded that he thinks it eventually gets there but doesn't have the map to confirm.

Commissioner Jones asked Jerome Coward about the drainage being plugged completely.

Jerome Coward answered yes, the sediments over the years caused him to not be able to go any further.

Scott Godefroy suggested Farmville Public Works come back out and do those set of pipes and that would help.

Casey Rogerson, Bethel citizen, asked if there was concrete stuck in there.

Jerome Coward explained that on one side of the ditch they pulled out shoes, blankets, bottles, and bookbags.

Mike Holmes said that when the Town came through to put the lines down beside the road, they would tear up the driveway and put the concrete that was pulled up in the ditch.

Joe Peele said that Jerome mentioned to him that the pipes needed to be further away from the road.

Scott Godefroy suggested that the two sets of pipes need to be 80 feet long and the best thing would be to change the pipes out.

Commissioner Jones asked does this suggestion include what was discussed in the previous meeting.

Scott Godefroy replied yes and discussed the problem of the trees being in the way and no side slope to the current ditches. He proposed at least a 2 to 1 side slope on a 5 and ½ foot would take up 30 feet of overall space. This is why the 30-foot easement is requested.

Travis Rogerson asked how far on the other side of Cherry Street would this be done?

Scott Godefroy replied none.

Mike Holmes asked so how does this really affect him?

Ben Williams replied that citizens may have received a letter just for spillover should the Town go through with replacing the pipes by their property and may need a temporary construction easement.

Mike Holmes suggested that you can use any part of his property as long as it's cleaned up afterwards but not disrupt his neighbor's property.

Scott Godefroy said the 30-foot easement only provides for the ditch itself and not for access for equipment usage.

Interim Town Manager said that part of the intent was to take questions from the citizens especially if you have received a letter from the Town regarding tonight's meeting. The Town would love to get a voluntary donation of the easement, but each individual property will have separate discussions on expectations. The Town will need to eventually obtain the easements.

Joe Peel asked to clarify that the reason for straightening the ditch out between Cherry Street and Cecil Street was to ease the tension on the south side of potential bank erosion for a ditch that has already been there for 80 plus years and for houses that have been there for 70 plus years. These currently don't have a problem unless Mr. Raymond Little said something different. He does not see the reason to have the ditch relocated instead of just continuing to clean it out.

Scott Godefroy replied that continuing to clean it out could possibly be ok but in case of another major event more problems may arise just like in the case of Mr. Chase Colson.

Joe Peel suggested to just add riprap to the bend on the current ditch and not spend the extra money to dig out a whole new ditch,

Interim Town Manager replied that was one of the four options presented to the Town by Rivers and Associates in the previous meeting.

Kelli Peel expressed that she doesn't understand why there is a need to change what's there because the water doesn't get that high and it drains pretty quickly after a big rain. However, this change would majorly affect her property.

Interim Town Manager said that it was discussed doing the project in two phases. However, this would double mobilization costs by the contractor. He then stated that you could do some riprap now and save the relocation for a future time.

Scott Godefroy explained one reason for the change was to not just make an adjustment for one property but include all properties that could potentially be affected.

Joe Peel asked about the place where the line of trees is, and will the Town begin to maintain that or will they continue to let the one side grow at will and keep the other side trimmed.

Scott Godefroy said the plan is to try and keep it from eroding anymore.

Kellie Peel asked did the Town vote and make a decision on the options presented without letting the homeowners know before letters were sent to them.

Interim Town Manager responded that these options were discussed in open meetings that were posted and advertised. No meetings have been held in secret.

Commissioner Jones commented that it seems that this is not a legal issue for the majority of the people that have received letters.

Joe Peel commented that he thinks that it's just an issue with the culverts and not the ditch itself. The ditch only needs to be addressed on Cecil Street near Chase Colson's house and not between Cecil Street and Cherry Street.

Mike Holmes suggested that the town vote again on another option.

Mayor Wilson discussed the problems with the ditches and his observations after the process of cleaning out the ditches. The process was stopped and they began to focus on the concerns brought forth by Chase Colson and his property. Along with addressing his issues they wanted to include any other property that could be potentially affected the same way. He suggested to continue to clean out the ditch as originally planned and he believes the water will flow. If the Town later finds out that it starts eroding by Raymond Little's house, the Town can go back and put riprap in there.

Raymond Little said that there is already erosion at his property.

Jerome Coward said that the riprap will work. In his opinion those areas need to be filled in. One plan was to lay pipe and cover everything up which eliminates the erosion problem. He suggested that as long as there was an egress in and out, then that's what the Town needed to go with. The other plan was relocating the ditch, and the other plan was to put riprap all the way down and flatten the whole ditch. Both Chase Colson and Raymond's property issues are not the same in his opinion. His suggestion is to fill it in and dig it out.

Scott Godefroy said to use riprap you have to have decent side slopes. Even if you leave the ditch, it needs to be shifted enough to get some decent side slopes.

Mayor Wilson stated that the Board has made a decision and it may not be what the citizens would like but the Board is still open to hearing the opinions of the citizens.

Tyler Keen asked are the ditches that were cleaned, go out to Conetoe Creek.

Mayor Wilson answered no.

Interim Town Manager explained that the Town has met with the Pitt Edgecombe Drainage system twice and they are doing some research on what the issues may be.

Commissioner Jones said that the Board voted for the most expensive option and that may not be what is needed.

Mayor Wilson responded that if the ditches were cleaned out hopefully it would help and working with Pitt-Edgecombe Drainage will help by taking it a section at a time before a large storm comes.

Commissioner Conger commented that the ditch is very close to those homes.

Earl Harris asked will the Town put pipe in the area near Chase Colson's house.

Scott Godefroy said they will fill the old ditch back in which will cause him to gain land.

Heather Garrett said once you move all of that you create another erosion problem. How will that be stabilized?

Scott Godefroy said you will restabilize it with grass and a decent side slope. It is tough to get something to grow on land that's so straight up and down.

Earl Harris wanted to know if the Town would pipe the ditch or lay riprap inside the ditch.

Interim Town Manager said neither according to what Rivers has designed. This is an open ditch that flows into Edgecombe County. There is no riprap here and no piping.

Earl Harris asked what the options are.

Joe Peel responded that the Board has already voted.

Mayor Wilson suggested that the process was put on hold because Chase Colson's house needed to be handled.

Interim Town Manager said the Board had already voted on how to move forward unless the vote is amended.

The citizens continued to discuss the problems with the ditch, changing it, adding riprap and/or adding slopes.

Interim Town Manager asked the Board do they have a desire to modify the approach to this project that was previously voted on. He then asked Rivers would they recommend modifying the approach to this project.

Heather Garrett suggested that it would make more sense to address this issue at Chase Colson's house to fix and straighten the ditch there and work backwards to get it right.

Ben Williams said that is correct, working downstream to up. He discussed the problem with another citizen that had flooding which was addressed and then the issue with Chase Colson's house came up. The project was stopped again to address that.

Scott Godefroy continued to explain how the process should work. They were addressing the structural problem and have to mitigate future problems they may have as a result of increase flow in that area. Rivers is able to go back and tweak some things. No matter what is done it would need to be able to be maintained. A ditch carries more water than a pipe. A pipe carries more maintenance than a ditch. Putting in riprap to do so you have to work on the side that you

are putting in on. You will need that shoulder that is not there. Once more information is obtained, Rivers can make better decisions.

Commissioner Jones suggested that if more information is needed the best thing is to get it.

Interim Town Manager suggested that we need a motion to capture what the Board desires.

Ben Williams said the survey work has been completed and changes can be made.

Interim Town Manager is in agreement with the change when it can save some money.

Commissioner Lilley asked if there will be a problem with this in 15 years.

Scott Godefroy said with steep slopes you will continue to have those issues.

Interim Town Manager commented that the ditch needs to be maintained or trees and other things will grow up in it.

Ben Williams suggested that for maintaining the sewer, the State likes to see 10% cleaning every year and every 10 years you can come back. The first cleaning will take longer and then maintenance will be less.

Mayor Pro-Tem Griggs made a motion to modify the Stormwater relocation project (which the Board approved at its Special Called Meeting on May 12, 2026) from Cecil Street to Cherry Street, to keep the existing alignment, straightening the curve, moving the intersecting line slightly north and replacing the pipes on Cherry and Cecil Street, Commissioner Conger seconded the motion, the motion carried unanimously.

Joe Peel asked will the Town still use the same points 80 feet out of the property.

Scott Godefroy replied that they have done spot shots and surveyed it to get inverts of the existing pipes. It's an open plan right now and they can make some modifications based on the citizens' inputs.

Commissioner Whitehurst asked that the Town send out notifications and letters to citizens that would be affected ahead of time.

Commissioner Whitehurst made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:27pm, Commissioner Lilley seconded the motion, the motion carried unanimously.

Mayor, Carl Wilson

ATTEST:

Linda Sheppard, Town Clerk

Date

