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Description automatically generated**Peconic Estuary Protection Committee**

**Meeting Summary – November 1, 2022**

**Held at Cornell Cooperative Extension Offices**

**Griffing Avenue, Riverhead**

**ATTENDEES**

**Committee Member Representatives**

Town of Riverhead | Drew Dillingham (Committee Chair)

Town of Brookhaven | Veronica King (Committee Vice Chair)

Jason Blizzard | Town of Riverhead

Suffolk County | Frank Castelli

Suffolk County | Camilo Salazar

Town of Southampton | Tom Houghton

Village of Sag Harbor | Mary Ann Eddy

**Additional Participants**

Legislator Al Krupski

Gwynn Schroeder |Legislator Krupski’s Office

Jessica Sullivan | Legislator Krupski’s Office

Corey Humphrey | Suffolk County Soil and Water Conservation District

Joyce Novak | Peconic Estuary Program

Valerie Virgona | Peconic Estuary Program

Peconic Estuary Protection Committee | Patricia Aitken, Coordinator

The meeting was called to order at 10:05, attendees were reminded that the meeting was being recorded

**I.**  **Minutes Review**

Minutes of the April 12 Meeting were posted to the Peconic Committee website.

**II. Direction of PEPC**

Pat Aitken has informed the committee she will be leaving her position at the end of the year. The Committee had a discussion regarding the future direction of the committee and considered that the vision for the Committee needs to be readjusted. The PEPC was modeled on the other protection committees on Long Island which have much smaller embayments and projects done in one municipality have an immediacy of effect on the waterbody, which is not the case in the Peconic Estuary.

Discussions included:

* Tabling activities are not the most effective outreach method, and that in the aftermath of Covid, social media has overtaken tabling.
* Conducting outreach to school age children was not an appropriate role for the Coordinator, as the PEP or other environmental organizations does a very effective job in that. Conducting outreach to civic organizations and Rotary clubs, or to high school and college students would be more effective.
* A beneficial activity for municipal members would be to organize and conduct trainings, such as IDDE, for new hires in municipalities.
* Joyce mentioned the Homeowner’s Rewards Program and suggested that perhaps the PEPC Coordinator could assist with outreach to homeowners.
* Pat said she would see what municipal trainings would be available from other stormwater coalitions in New York State.
* It might be beneficial for members of the PEC to attend the PEP Local Government Committee meetings which have good energy and are attended by elected officials and some town/village employees. Perhaps the PEPC could piggyback on their meetings and have its own meeting after.
* Quarterly meetings of the PEPC may prove to be sufficient.
* There was discussion of the Coordinator contacting Town Attorneys and Town Planners, as well as the Engineering staff, as they may find the work of the Committee valuable but might be unaware of the activities of the Committee.
* Pat mentioned that she worked with Gwynn Schroeder of Legislator Krupski’s office to develop a database of model codes based on NYS model codes. This database is in the PEPC google drive. Pat will review the database to see what updates may be needed, especially regarding septic regulations.
* Pat suggested having student interns to expand upon a database of contacts for Town attorneys, planning officials, etc.
* A possible activity would be to develop a site similar to Save the Rain <https://savetherain.us/projects/> which is a listing of stormwater related activities in Syracuse, There is a list of projects done, and one page descriptions and illustrations of projects that could be a valuable tool for municipalities and could perhaps tie in to a GIS database. This site could be used as outreach for local homeowners as well as be a resource for municipal offices.
* The new permit will be a wild card. The DEC received significant pushback from the last permit, so it is possible it will be scaled back to a more implementable permit. Timing of when the permit will be released is uncertain but a coordinated response from Long Island and statewide coalitions was essential in responding to the last draft permit.

Drew asked what should be done in terms of hiring a new Coordinator. There is value in continuing the Committee especially in coordinating responses to the MS4 permits when they are issued and instances such as the coordinated action take which led to the suspension of the TMDLs. Each municipality gets MS4 credit for being part of a stormwater coalition and, there is sufficient funding that the collection of dues will be suspended for a time. It is incumbent on all of the members to find a new vision. The role of the Coordinator is diverse in that knowledge of policy, how government works, MS4 regulations, comfort in speaking with the public, elected officials and employees, as well as some knowledge of social media are needed skill sets. There was a discussion of paying a coordinator based on tasks, (i.e., X amount of dollars for outreach) but there would still have to be metrics for those tasks, and there would need to be some flexibility as not all activities may occur on a monthly basis.

The posting for the Coordinator job may have been disseminated through the stormwater listserv and word of mouth. Veronica said she thought the posting might have been on Indeed.

The municipal representatives in the room agreed that their staff did not have the time to take on the role of Coordinator, and that it would not be feasible to pay a town employee on staff using PEPC funds. Pat said it might be possible to have a municipal employee do the work as a part time contract employee in their off hours. Tom said he would be reluctant to have an employee work in that capacity, but others saw that this could be advantageous to a municipality. Drew asked if hiring a consultant would be a consideration, but Pat said she felt it would not be the best use of PEPC funds. Using a graduate student was discussed, but ultimately ruled out, as there would probably be a lot of turnover and a learning curve for the student would be too steep

The committee will convene again in late November or early December when all members have had an opportunity to consider the various options presented above, or perhaps present new ones.

**III. Discussion of Open Meeting Law:**

There was discussion regarding the open meeting law. The Committee posts notices of the meeting on the PEPC Calendar on the committee website, and meeting summaries are posted on the website for public review and download. It was decided that no action needed to be taken at this time.

**IV. Signage Project**

Signs for Sag Harbor and Shelter Island are almost completed. Greenport, North Haven, Suffolk County and NYSDOT will get generic signs. Most of the signs are interchangeable and can be shared by municipalities. The signs can be fabricated and placed on site and/or can be used and shared on social media and municipal websites. Signs have not been fabricated yet as it would be less expensive and more efficient to do them when all are completed.

**V. Next Steps**

Pat will look at other NYS Stormwater Coalitions for municipal training videos/PowerPoints

Pat will update the model codes database especially about Septic regulations

Veronica will research the Coordinator job description, and where the Coordinator position was posted in the past

Pat will compile list of passwords, etc., and will send to Drew and Veronica

A meeting will be held in late November/early December to further address PEPC activities and future Coordinator position.

Tom Houghton will extend Pat Aitken’s and Paul Singer’s contract to April 2023.