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Description automatically generated**Peconic Estuary Protection Committee**

**Meeting Summary – February 1, 2023**

**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)

Town of Southampton | Tom Houghton

Town of Southold | Michael Collins

**Additional Participants**

Corey Humphrey | Suffolk County Soil and Water Conservation District

Scott Curatolo-Wegemann | Cornell Cooperative Extension

Peconic Estuary Protection Committee | Patricia Aitken, Coordinator

Eileen Keenan, guest

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

1. Minutes Review – minutes from November meeting will be posted to the website.
2. Camilo Salazar will be new Suffolk County representative to the Committee.
3. Eileen Keenan has accepted the position as Coordinator. Pat will be working with her on the transition.
4. A joint Protection Committee will be held in May of 2023. Pat reviewed some of the topics, which include Living Shorelines and Nitrogen monitoring.
5. Review of Signage – Veronica King distributed printouts of the signs that have been designed so far. Pat said that when all the signs are completed, she would like to do a social media splash, and reminded the committee that all the signs can be shared by all members of the committee for use on social media. There was discussion of the possibility of having all signs translated into Spanish. Corey said that the County offers Spanish language translation services. Tom mentioned that he will have to extend Paul Singer’s contract with the County.
6. Transition Planning
   1. There was discussion regarding when Eileen will take over the Committee. Tom can set up the contract to start on April 1 for her. She will also need an email for the Committee. Tom will set up a contract for Pat until the end of June.
   2. There was discussion renaming the committee to refocus the purpose and objectives of the committee, and to get a better separation from PEP. If such a name is done it should be done before the signage is completed. Internally on the committee, the focus was on stormwater, but with the lack of a new permit, that purpose has been diluted.
   3. Are there stormwater concerns that need to be looked at now, that are not being looked at?
   4. The committee can become more involved in coastal resiliency issues, and should it be brought more to the foreground of the committee. NYS is increasingly requiring that coast resiliency, green infrastructure be incorporated into grant applications and planning initiatives.
   5. It was also discussed that the training modules need to be reviewed and updated. Eileen can provide trainings to staff members.
   6. Eileen mentioned how much interaction there is with other committees – Pat told her that the committees are in informal conversation frequently, and that when issues such as the permit arises, the committees work together to develop a response
   7. The relationship the Committee and the PEP were discussed. Pat said that she has always felt frustrated by the lack of the visibility of the PEPC with elected officials and municipal officials. The PEP has a very visible public face, and has a local government committee that in some ways can supplant the PEPC. The Committee has a role in working with municipal officials, but is not really meant to be a public outreach group. Pat attends the TAC, CAC and Local Government Committee meetings of the PEP. Eileen mentioned such issues at the TMDLs, MS4 permit, the 303D list, and municipalities, like Southold, cutting outfalls, and the coastal resiliency issues. There was discussion regarding the development of new TMDLs, but it does not seem likely that this will occur anytime soon.
   8. If a new permit is not issued anytime soon, what should the committee do with regard to stormwater and addressing issues? Michael suggested perhaps putting together what documentation, procedures will be needed and that the committee can develop these materials to be used by all members.
7. Joyce mentioned that the committee needs to vote on waiver of fees every year. Tom will provide the balance and Pat will send out the request to approve the waiver of fees.
8. Corey asked if it would be possible to make the Soil and Water an Advisory Member. There was discussion regarding this – as an advisory member, the District would not have a vote on the committee but neither would they pay a fee. . It would be a benefit to the District in that it could claim membership in an IMA, which is good for performance measures, etc. Michael said that any municipality that municipalities need to belong to an IMA in order to get a grant for a stormwater project. There was discussion that if the Town of East Hampton wanted to rejoin that the Town would not be obligated to pay dues at that time, but when dues are being collected again that they would be obliged to do so. There should be a clear distinction between Municipal members and Advisory members. Potential Advisory members should be voted on by the municipal members, and no municipalities should be allowed to be Advisory members. There was discussion regarding membership for the Shinnecock nation, as they own a large land area in the Newtown creek area. Michael said that the nation had some water quality initiatives that were ahead of what municipalities were doing and would like to see what they are doing now. As a sovereign nation, the Shinnecock nation does not have the regulations and controls in place that the municipalities have. Pat said that in some ways there already is an Advisory Committee as additional members are invited to attend and they submit advice and input. Corey said that as a formal member of the Committee, he could do printing or provide in-kind services. This will be discussed at the next PEPC meeting.
9. Pat asked members to email her with suggestions for new names for the Committee and that can be voted on at the next meeting. A new name, without having Peconic in the name, could potentially invite new members to join the committee.

The next meeting will be on April 5, 2023, and will be held in-person. There was discussion of doing a hybrid meeting. Tom asked for a calendar invite for the next meeting.

Eileen said she would like to increase participation on the committee, speak to people who may not have been involved, and be assured that her actions are of benefit to the committee.

Meeting ended at 11:40 am.