

COUNTY OF SUFFOLK



STEVEN BELLONE
COUNTY EXECUTIVE

DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING
DIVISION OF PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT
COUNCIL ON ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

Tom Gulbransen
Chairperson
CEQ

SUFFOLK COUNTY COUNCIL ON ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY MEETING SUMMARY

DATE: December 8, 2021
TIME: 9:30 AM – 11:30 AM
LOCATION: ZOOM Video Conference

PRESENT:

Thomas Gulbransen, Chair
Michael Kaufman, Vice Chair
Rob Carpenter Jr
Frank De Rubeis
Anthony Graves
Hon. Kara Hahn
Mark Haubner
Kaetlyn Jackson
Constance Kepert
Mary Ann Spencer
Herbert Strobel

CAC REPRESENTATIVES:

None

STAFF:

Sarah Lansdale, Director of Planning
Andrew Freleng, Chief Planner
John Corral, Environmental Projects Coordinator
Christine DeSalvo, Principal Office Assistant

GUESTS:

Nick Gibbons, Chief Environmental Analyst, Suffolk County Department of Parks, Recreation and Conservation

Kyle Swaringen, Principal Civil Engineer, Suffolk County Department of Public Works

Tom Schaefer, P.E., Senior Associate, D&B Engineers

Aram Terchunian, Coastal Geologist, First Coastal Consulting

Kevin McAllister, President, Defend H2O

Hon. Al Krupski, Suffolk County Legislator, District 1

Christina DeLisi, Suffolk County Legislative Aide for Suffolk County Presiding Officer

Maria Nida, Assistant County Attorney, Suffolk County Department of Law

Alyssa Turano, Legislative Aide, Hon. Hahn, District 5

Dorian Dale, Sustainability Director, Suffolk County Department of Economic Development and Planning

Tom Gulbransen, the Chair of the CEQ, was delayed in getting to the meeting so Mike Kaufman, the Vice Chair of the CEQ, started the meeting.

Mr. Kaufman asked John Corral, staff to the CEQ, to read the opening statement regarding the meeting.

Mr. Corral read the following statement:

“This is the regularly scheduled December 8, 2021 meeting of the Suffolk County Council on Environmental Quality and for the record we do have a quorum present.

The notice of the meeting follows the Open Meetings Law as amended by, Governor Hochul, whom on 9/2/2021 signed into Law Chapter 417 of the Laws of 2021 which, in part, authorizes County committees and bodies to hold meetings remotely via videoconferencing or teleconferencing and that such meetings are recorded and later transcribed.

In this instance, we will be using ZOOM and will be recording the entirety of the meeting.”

Minutes:

None

Correspondence:

None

Public Portion:

Mr. Kaufman requested that if any member of the public wishes to speak about a project to please hold their public comments until the CEQ reaches the project review portion of the meeting.

Historic Trust Docket:

Note - Mr. Gulbransen, the Chair of the CEQ, joined the meeting at the start of the Historic

Trust docket.

Director's Report:

Updates on Housing Program for Historic Trust Sites:

Richard Martin, Director of Historic Services with Suffolk County Parks, noted that Suffolk County Parks currently has two vacancies. The first vacancy is a house at Northville Bluffs County Park in Riverhead on Sound Avenue. This house has been completely restored and renovated. Suffolk County Parks is having an open house on Saturday, December 11, 2021 for people interested in renting the house.

The second vacancy is at Coindre Hall where Suffolk County Parks has an apartment located within the main house. Suffolk County Parks is doing some work to update this apartment and then will be showing the apartment for rent.

Updates on Historic Trust Custodial Agreements:

Mr. Martin, noted two Suffolk County Legislative Resolutions on the LADS reports that are moving forward. Suffolk County Introductory Resolution 1711-2021 will create a new license agreement to extend the Deepwells Farms Historical Society's custodial agreement at the Suffolk Deepwells Farms property. Mr. Martin noted that this group has been at the property since 2007 and has been successful fund raising through their haunted house Halloween events. This raised money is then used to restore and maintain the Deepwells Farm property.

The other resolution is Suffolk County Resolution IR 1869-2021 which will authorize a new license agreement with the W.S. Commerdinger Preservation Society which is located at the Suffolk County Commerdinger Junior County Park. This will extend this custodial agreement with the Commerdinger Preservation Society to continue their work restoring the Commerdinger House. Once the House is preserved it will be open to the public.

Project Review:

Recommended Unlisted Actions:

- A. Proposed Indian Island Living Shoreline Project, Indian Island County Park, Town of Riverhead

Public Comments for this Project:

Kevin McAllister, President of the group Defend H2O, provided his public comments regarding this project. Mr. McAllister, noted that he has spoken about this project at the CEQ several times in the past few years. Mr. McAllister said that when the CEQ first reviewed

this project a few years ago, he stated that he did not believe the original project should be described as a Living Shoreline Project due to the installation of a back lying bulkhead. Mr. McAllister noted that the modified project now involves two breakwaters, backfilling and plantings and that he believes these are positive endeavors to try to stabilize the shoreline. Mr. McAllister also stated that it should be remembered that this is a natural shoreline and voiced his concern if this project was anchored with a bulkhead.

There were no further public comments received.

Project Presentation:

A presentation regarding the proposed Project was given by Nick Gibbons, Chief Environmental Analyst, Suffolk County Parks, Tom Schaefer, P.E., Senior Associate, D&B Engineers and Aram Terchunian, Coastal Geologist, First Coastal Consulting.

It was noted that since the project was first reviewed and tabled by the Suffolk County Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) at the CEQ's October 18, 2017 meeting, the proposed project has been reviewed and received the required applicable approvals/permits by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) and other regulatory agencies. This proposed project, which has been modified from its original design by the above noted regulatory review process, now requires construction funding approval by the Suffolk County Legislature. As a result, the modified proposed Project is before the CEQ for a SEQRA recommendation to the Legislature.

The presentation to the CEQ noted that the Project is proposed along the Indian Island County Park's eastern headland, adjacent to Circle Drive, in an area of the Park that has been experiencing ongoing severe erosion. This severe erosion is threatening sensitive archaeological/cultural resources, tidal marshland and Park infrastructure and has forced Suffolk County to frequently place sand in the area to keep the adjacent roadway (Circle Drive) from being undermined. The proposed project is intended as an environmentally sustainable method to provide increased protection against erosion, stabilize the shoreline and the adjacent navigational channel and restore and enhance the Park's tidal marshland and ecosystem.

The presentation stated that the proposed living shoreline project consists of three project components: two segmented emergent rock sills; marsh habitat restoration/enhancement and a future contingent component involving a cantilevered PVC retaining wall covered with beach compatible fill and planted vegetation. The project also includes a Monitoring and Adaptive Management Plan that will insure that the Project is functioning as intended, identify the need for any repairs and inform the management of the living shoreline project going forward. It was stated that the proposed contingent cantilevered retaining wall will only be constructed if it is deemed necessary following any failure of the breakwaters and marsh restoration and after the CEQ has been briefed on the shoreline monitoring data and the need for the retaining wall.

CEQ Member Discussion:

In addition to the project presentation the CEQ asked a number of questions and then discussed a number of topics. These topics included:

- The project review history including when the project was first reviewed at the CEQ back at 2017 and how the project has been modified since the CEQ originally reviewed the project in 2017.
- The project need and the unique cultural and historical resources that are present in this area of Indian Island County Park
- Recent developments regarding updated guidance on shoreline stabilization projects as well as other Living Shoreline projects that are taking place in other parts of the United States.
- The phased nature of this project and the importance of the Monitoring and Adaptive Management Plan that is now part of this project. It was also discussed that all project phases are being considered by this SEQRA review. However, the future contingent bulkheading phase of the project will only be constructed if it is deemed necessary following any failure of the breakwaters and marsh restoration and after the CEQ has been briefed on the shoreline monitoring data and the need for the retaining wall.

After the above noted Project Presentation and the CEQ's extended discussion, a motion was made by Mr. Kaufman to recommend classification of the proposed project as an Unlisted Action with a Negative Declaration. The motion was seconded by Mr. De Rubeis. Motion carried.

Project Review:

Recommendations for LADS Report:

Recommendations for Legislative Resolutions Laid on the Table October 5, 2021, November 16, 2021 and November 22, 2021

After a brief discussion, Mr. Kaufman made a motion to accept the staff recommendations on Legislative Resolutions Laid on the Table October 5, 2021, November 16, 2021 and November 22, 2021. The motion was seconded by Mr. DeRubeis. Motion carried.

Other Business:

The CEQ discussed and approved the CEQ Meeting Schedule for 2022.

After the approval of the CEQ Meeting Schedule, Legislator Kara Hahn noted that due to the changes in the Legislature it is unlikely that she will be the official Legislative member of the CEQ in 2022. Legislator Hahn thanked the CEQ staff and members for all of their hard work and dedication. Legislator Hahn also said she was grateful for being a part of the CEQ for so many years. The CEQ also thanked Legislator Hahn for all of her work with the CEQ and at the Suffolk County Legislature.

CAC Concerns:

None

The CEQ adjourned the Meeting