



The Town of Fenwick Island

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INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE MEETING

May 13, 2025, at 10:00 a.m.

Town Hall

MINUTES

Members Present: Jack Armstrong (Zoom), Tim Leahy (Zoom), Susan Brennan (Zoom), Tim Bergin (Zoom), Nuvan Seneviratne (Zoom), Geri Verlaque, Jay Ryan (Zoom), Jon Miller (Zoom)

Others Present: Ann Riley, Janice Bortner (Zoom), Natalie Magdeburger (Zoom), Thomas Bouchelle

Staff Present: Kathy Grab

Flag salute and call to order at 10:06 a.m.

1. Approval of prior minutes from April 16, 2025

Motion to approve April 16, 2025 minutes on a Jack Armstrong/Tim Bergin motion.

Motion passed unanimously.

2. Update From Tim Leahy and The Bayside Stormwater Management and Flood Protection Working Group.
 - a. Meeting on April 22nd was productive.
 - Confirmation of the annual August meeting for August 21st at 1:00 p.m.
 - Three key topics and speakers for the meeting, focused on resiliency and preparedness:
 - ~ Danielle Swallow (Sea Grant) – Community Resilience.
 - ~ Larry Trout (Straughn Environmental) – Engineering Solutions.
 - ~ Kathy Potter (DNREC, National Flood Insurance Program) Flood Insurance.
 - Natalie Magdeburger praised Kathy Potter's flood insurance presentation as practical and impactful, with tools to help homeowners. She recommended having Kathy Potter speak and share resources on the town website and Facebook.
 - Tim Leahy stated they are shifting the focus: from town owned assets to individual property solutions. Q&A and next steps planned.
 - BRIC grant loss led to short-term project planning (e.g., Farmington Street demo, led by Mike Locke).

- Need for long-term roadmap and engineering support continues.
- Tim Leahy and Susan Brennan to revisit our Comprehensive Plan, aligning current efforts and identifying areas needing updates or more detail.
- Tim Leahy gave a brief update on the Resiliency Summary and gave some recommendations.
 - ~ A & B (Federal partnerships, public engagement): Ongoing and successful.
 - ~ E (Beach replenishment): Active at the council level.
 - ~ C (Drainage): Proposed to broaden to include flood prevention and public property improvements. Includes Farmington project and 2024 survey/database work. Suggests formalizing a bulkhead maintenance plan and incorporating the stormwater management plan tied to flood insurance.
 - ~ F (Grant funding): Suggest renaming it to "Develop Comprehensive Project Plan." Emphasis on defining projects before seeking funding. Plan would:
 - Cover town-led and volunteer projects.
 - Use current funding for short-term planning (e.g., engineering with Strawn, coordination with DELDOT).
 - Guide medium-term design and long-term capital investment.
 - ~ Final items in Comp Plan (Resiliency funding, code updates, design guidelines): Still in discussion—will proceed after more detailed planning.
 - ~ Tim Leahy proposed adding a new section to the Comp Plan to organize these efforts and guide use of current and future funding.
- Recommendation F was seeking grant funding for projects, the group has worked on a master plan on projects and will then seek funding.
- Both Susan Brennan, Tim Bergin and Jack Armstrong all agreed he was on the right track and did a good job. Susan Brennan thanked Tim Leahy for his work.
- Tim Leahy will do some updates for the committee.
- Meeting with Danielle Friday to prep for August.
- Plan to keep the Infrastructure Committee updated regularly.
- Will use the Comp Plan items as agenda framework, diving into active topics.
- Tim Leahy will follow up with Mike Locke on the Farmington Project.

3. Road Paving and Maintenance Update.

a. Road Paving Update.

- Paving completed on Wright, McWilliams, and South Shoals; partially completed on Bay.
 - Final step: crack sealing.
 - Project remains on schedule and progressing well.
- b. Maintenance Update
- CRS funds cannot be used for GIS, GIS is still affordable per Tim Leahy.
4. Old Business.
- a. None.
5. New Business.
- a. Seminars
- Susan Brennan and Natalie Magdeburger attended the Flood Ready Community seminar—valuable session with good networking, including Chase Barnes.
 - Attended Sussex County Association of Towns dinner on Brownfields; reconnected in person with Jen Reitz (UD IPA) and Lori Spinolo—both key contacts from Comp Plan work.
- b. Natalie Magdeburger expressed the need for moving forward to produce the master plan.
- Emphasized the importance of developing a full master plan to prioritize, budget, and justify ordinance changes.
 - Legal perspective: New ordinances must be backed by solid scientific data, especially since they may need to apply retroactively (not grandfathered).
 - Public safety and property loss are key justifications for legal enforceability.
 - Stressed urgency—permits and implementation (e.g., bulkheads) take time; 2030 flooding risks are real.
 - Advocated for moving forward with the comprehensive vision to support ordinance drafting and continued public engagement.
 - Expressed strong support and appreciation for the group's progress and leadership.

10:35 A.M. Nuvan Seneviratne left.

- Tim Leahy and Natalie Magdeburger discussed feasibility and ordinance, public safety, property law, property loss vs. value, proactive planning, and delays in bulkhead repairs.
- c. Tim Begin advised there is a question of liability, for the town, Sussex County, the State and personal liability when you are not cooperating. Natalie Magdeburger agreed, though advising that any ordinance must be held up in court, an engineering study is essential and supports using the study to prioritize and budget. RTT funds are there to use should needed.

- d. Jon Miller questioned whether road elevation raised be a mitigation tactic. Natalie Magdeburger agreed but engineering guidance is needed.
 - e. Tim Bergin Noted that DELDOT conducted a study two years ago, exploring measures like swing gates. The working group and infrastructure committee have previously reviewed this.
 - f. Geri Verlaque advised Residents need more involvement and updates.
 - g. Kick off to summer on Saturday, May 31st by the Planning Commission and Business Committee, Susan Brennan would like a flyer with August meeting speakers to hand out.
 - h. After the Public Participation, committee discussed Ann Riley's Ann Riley urged momentum and wanted to clarify if the Town could fund Straughn study using existing funds. Natalie Magdeburger confirmed availability of resources and possibility of renegotiating scope and cost. General agreement to proceed strategically and continue public discussions in August.
6. Public Participation.
- a. Janice Bortner suggested reaching out to a landscape architect from the Corps of Engineers she is working with, who collaborated with retired engineers on Poplar and Smith Island flood mitigation projects. These contacts could offer valuable engineering insight.
 - b. Janice Bortner noted that the town may have raised funds for beach replenishment in the 1970s and suggested looking into past fundraising methods as a possible model. She suggested a \$500 assessment per household for flood mitigation could be widely supported, especially since a grant was not received. Encouraged exploring this option and thanked the team for their work. Tim Leahy offered to get the name from Janice Bortner and reach out to them, the projects mentioned have relevance to what the town is trying to do.
 - c. Ann Riley asked if the committee would immediately move forward with Straugh if \$400,000 were suddenly available. Both Tim Leahy and Susan Brennan stated no. Ann Riley questioned why the committee would not proceed with the study if \$400,000 were available, given it was already deemed essential. Tim Leahy explained he agreed the study is important but noted that they have learned since the BRIC grant denial. He would revise the scope—adding and removing tasks—so funds might be used differently. Ann Riley emphasized the need to engage the community, noting limited public participation. Suggested the best way to get attention is to talk about money—highlighting that residents hold high-value real estate and may need to contribute financially through taxes, a resiliency fund, or bulkhead costs. Stressed the importance of honest, urgent conversations and proposed discussing funding

openly at the August annual meeting to drive engagement and action. Committee discussion ensued with agreement on Ann Riley's suggestion to keep moving forward.

7. Date of Next Meeting.

a. June 10, 2025 at 10:00 A.M.

8. Adjournment.

Motion to adjourn at 11:17 a.m. on a Geri Verlaque/Tim Bergin motion.

Motion passed unanimously.