

News From Southern Shores Town Hall

Thursday, May 21, 2009

From the Town Manager

CANALS MAINTNENCE DREDGING PROJECT

Over the past several weeks a number of misconceptions, misinformation, misunderstandings, assumptions, rumors, and innuendo have led to severe confusion over the status of the Canals Maintenance Dredging Project. The following fact sheet is provided to clarify the Town's position and reiterate information that some may have missed.

- The Town was successful in overcoming the legal challenges of the State's denial of a permit to conduct the dredging.
- In pursuing its permits, the Town has and is working with fourteen (14) agencies; ten (10) State and four (4) federal.
- Presently the Town is exploring the viability of utilizing three (3) privately owned sites for the placement of dredge spoils one (1) of which could be permanent and two (2) that would be temporary.
- The Town has expressed interest in one site for possible purchase or lease and to-date the owner has been unresponsive to the Town Manager and his attorney has been unresponsive to the Town Attorney.
- The Town was successful in having the US Coast Guard declare the main channel as a hazard to navigation. The fact that emergency vessels, Coast Guard and Marine Police, are severely limited in their ability to navigate, was one of the several factors in the Town's success in its legal challenges to the State. Dredging the main channel has always been a part of the overall dredging plan.
- Every reasonable attempt has been made to keep the citizens informed regarding this project. To-date, the Town has regularly included a report on the status of this project at Town Council Meetings, information was included in previous Broadcast messages and posted on the Town's website, Town officials have made presentations at various association meetings, and formal presentations have been made by the Town Attorney, Town engineer, and the Town's Environmental Consultant. Previously state officials have also made presentations at Council Meetings - regrettably many of these meetings were poorly attended.
- The Town was extremely well represented by Council Members Jodi Hess and Jim Pfizenmayer at the May 20th SSCA meeting. Mayor Smith and Mayor Pro Tem McDonald were out-of-town at previously scheduled business engagements set before the SSCA rescheduled their meeting.
- The State will not allow the construction of a "sand island" to place the spoils.
- To-date, the State has not permitted a project to remove spoils by barge.
- The construction and use of a temporary spoils dewatering and transfer site is required if we are to truck the material out-of-town; it cannot simply be loaded into trucks directly from the pipe.
- Dredging contractors have declined to "bid" on the project to-date due to the uncertainty of obtaining the final permit and the Town's inability to identify a spoils location. Therefore many technical specifications, methodologies, and costs remain unknown.
- Permit conditions restrict the type of dredging to Hydraulic. Mechanical Dredging is not permitted further complicating land application and material handling.
- Filling the distal end of canal(s) is not a permissible option.
- Hydraulic dredging can be done in a classic earthen berm or into geo-bags, a more costly but less invasive process, a process that is under consideration.
- The Town has been working feverishly to come up with the least invasive and most cost-effective solution to the situation.
- The Town will retain a Project Manager as soon as we are certain that we have a project.