

Nags Head Septic Health Advisory Committee

Meeting Notes

July 30, 2025

Location: Conference Room, Town Hall

Attending: Comm Megan Lambert, Bob Muller, Rob Crawford, Wayne Varilek; Basil Belsches, Bob Edwards

Staff: Andy Garman, Amy Miller, Kelly Wyatt, Joe Costello, Conner Twiddy

Staff welcomed the committee and provided updates on several ongoing Septic Health Initiative efforts and related outreach activities.

Deputy Town Manager/Finance Director Amy Miller provided an update on discussions with the Local Government Commission (LGC) regarding the Division of Water Infrastructure (DWI) no-interest loan program and the potential to operate the loan as a revolving fund. Amy walked the committee through an amortization scenario using existing loan terms and assumptions, noting that if the agreement were executed on February 1, repayment over a three-year loan cycle would take approximately eight years at an estimated repayment rate of \$25,000 per year. Staff noted that the LGC is primarily concerned with the Town's ability to meet repayment obligations and does not dictate how the funds are reused, provided repayment is demonstrated. It was noted that any change to operating the loan as a revolving fund would require coordination with DWI staff. Committee members discussed pursuing clarification from DWI, including the possibility of formally notifying DWI staff of the Town's intent to repay and reuse funds, and expressed interest in maximizing the benefit of the loan program by extending its impact over multiple cycles. Staff noted that LGC approval of the loan program was anticipated in the coming week.

Planning Director Kelly Wyatt provided an update on proposed steps to pre-qualify local septic contractors to perform work under the DWI no-interest loan program, with the goal of ensuring compliance with Davis-Bacon prevailing wage requirements and American Iron and Steel (AIS) provisions. Staff described a proposed approach that would include hosting a brief evening workshop for contractors to review program requirements, including payment of prevailing wages (currently \$17.75 per hour), maintenance of certified payroll records, and documentation verifying that iron and steel materials used in septic repairs are made in the United States. Staff presented a draft packet of compliance materials and noted general consensus to move forward with this approach and include it within the scope of work submitted to DWI.

The committee discussed whether the loan program should require septic repairs to exceed minimum Dare County Health Department (DCHD) standards, such as requiring additional elevation or separation beyond what is currently mandated. Members noted that some repairs already require substantial fill and can approach \$40,000 in total cost.

The general consensus was to not impose requirements beyond existing DCHD standards, recognizing that higher standards could deter participation and that the loan program is voluntary. Committee members also discussed enforcement processes related to failing systems, including DCHD timelines for notices of violation and potential escalation. Staff noted that in cases of continued non-compliance, coordination with the Building Inspector and rental companies could be part of enforcement, including potential condemnation or utility disconnection if a system is not repaired or under contract for repair within a defined timeframe.

Staff shared several outreach and coordination updates. Environmental Planner Conner Twiddy reported that Donna Creef had invited him to participate in an Outer Banks Association of Realtors (OBAR) podcast to discuss the Septic Health Initiative. Conner also noted that staff have been invited to present at the October Water Quality Fisheries Symposium in Beaufort, North Carolina, with Conner and David Ryan planning to attend. Conner provided an update on FY 2024–2025 Septic Health Initiative statistics, reporting 110 pump-out credits issued, including 14 credits issued since the pump-out credit was increased from \$150 to \$250, 10 septic repair loans processed, and 137 septic system inspections completed. Staff noted anecdotal feedback from community interactions indicating that lack of understanding about fees and permitting requirements can discourage participation, highlighting the continued need for clear communication, education and outreach.

Staff also provided an update on groundwater and water-quality monitoring efforts. Loggers that could be raised were adjusted, batteries were replaced, and staff continue to address technical issues at certain locations. It was noted that water-level measurements are now being tracked as distance to groundwater rather than absolute water level due to well configuration. Staff reviewed recent data trends, including observations at Bonnett Street, Station 21 (where spikes were likely associated with rainfall and nearby road work), and Jockey's Ridge, which continues to show relatively consistent readings.

Staff noted that signage for water-quality loggers has been designed and will be ordered as soon as possible to improve visibility and public understanding of these loggers.

The committee discussed scheduling, noting that the next SHAC meeting is anticipated in October 2025, toward the end of the month.

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at approximately 11:00 AM.