



## Beaufort County Stormwater Management Utility Board (SWMU Board) Meeting Minutes

June 18, at 2:00 p.m.

Arthur Horne Building, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Meeting Room, Beaufort, SC

### Board Members

#### Present

Marc Feinberg, Chair  
Patrick Mitchell, Co-Chair  
Ron Buchanan  
Dennis Ross  
Ed Warner

#### Absent

Steven Andrews  
James Clark

### Ex-Officio Members

#### Present

Bill Baugher

#### Absent

Nate Farrow  
Van Willis

### Beaufort County Staff

Bradley Harriott  
Taylor Brewer  
Sally McLeod  
Pamela Cobb  
Jacob Bratz  
Paula Brown, County Liaison  
Tom Reitz, County Liaison  
Steven Carter  
Jared Fralix

### Visitors

Jim Watson  
Laura Wilson  
Anna LaPour

### 1. Meeting called to order – Mr. Feinberg called meeting to order at 2:00; the Board has a quorum.

- A. Approval of Agenda – Motion to approve by Ron Buchanan and seconded by Patrick Mitchell; approved.
- B. Approval of Minutes – Motion to approve by Dennis Ross and seconded by Patrick Mitchell; approved.

### 2. Introductions – Completed

### 3. Public Comment(s) - *Highlights*

- Ms. Laura Wilson – Alljoy Community. Ms. Wilson stated it has been four years since Preserve and Protect Alljoy came about. Some of the items advocated for during that time are as follows. The movement was initiated by a meeting held in a preservation person's home which announced to the community that a concrete path would be constructed, ripping out Spartina Boardwalks, expanded parking and the importance of connectivity. Knowing that the needs of this community have been four years long is why Preserve and Protect Alljoy began. The need to have cleaned and maintained ditches to help with the drainage issues, flooding, stormwater, access to affordable sewage, and transparency in decision making processes that affect the Alljoy community. In the past work was piece meal until meeting the SWUB Chairman and sharing the needs for the Community. We were happy to have a new Stormwater Manager hired to work with the community but were concerned that upper management

refused for this manager to work with the community. After many years of pressure from the community, the deputy director held a meeting. After this meeting, every single ditch in Alljoy was completed and cleared. We are truly appreciative of the Stormwater ground folks and SCDOT for their care about Alljoy. Ms. Wilson ended her comments by reminding the board that Alljoy can't have all the concrete down in Alljoy and asking the Board to help them.

#### 4. Reports –

- USCB – no report.
- Municipal Reports – Town of Bluffton reported that they passed the Wetland Ordinance unanimously. Mr. Baugher commended his staff for their efforts to get this passed. The budget for FY26 has also passed. The cooperation with the USCB Lab for the MST Lab and the Water Quality lab will continue; the Wayward Cove Drainage Study was received favorably by the state and county. The contract with McCormack Taylor has initiated with the wetland mapping with a conclusion possibly spring of 2026.
  - Mr. Feinberg thanked Mr. Baugher for his attendance and involvement in the Board Meetings. He informed the Board that he had, indeed, followed up with other Ex-Officio Board members reminding them of their duty to represent their municipality at the meetings.
  - Mr. Ross stated that it has been mentioned before that not only their lack of presence at the meetings but their unwillingness or inability to present their finance reports in a timely manner is of concern.
- Maintenance Report: Mr. Stephen Carter presented the report on Stormwater Infrastructure. Mr. Carter outlined major and minor projects carried out in the Municipality. All project information was provided to the Board via the Board Packet. Mr. Feinberg asked if the department was getting the support from the Engineering Department. Mr. Carter stated they were getting support. He also stated that his department was being fully staffed.
- Liaison Report – Mr. Reitz stated that we are living on an island that is surrounded by water. One of the most important things we do is protect our community from stormwater runoff. This department and the Board have done incredible work, particularly Bay Pines. He stated he was proud to be part of the team. Since Bay Pines, Bradley Circle, Ashton Cove, Cedar Woods and Point Comfort Club and Old Woodlands have long existing stormwater drainage problems. We are all learning from the issues we are encountering. Mr. Reitz stated he could not be prouder of the department and board. He stated the people are appreciative of the work done. Encouraged everyone to work together.
- Stormwater Utility Report – Taylor Brewer. Utility update – Woolpert is in the process of developing options for fee collection structure hoping to make all fees equitable. The next step will be a meeting for stakeholders to present options to them and incorporate their feedback. Once this is done a formal recommendation will be presented to the Board. Mr. Feinberg asked if the plan is to go with one fee collection company? Ms. Brewer explained the goal is to handle the tax run internally and to make it easy for citizens to understand where fees are coming from and how they are spent. Mr. Baugher asked when the stakeholder meeting will be held. Ms. Brewer stated within the next two weeks.

Some discussion has been had about having a third party to look at the SOLOCO manual to ensure it is cohesive and doable for engineers but also maintains the intent to force responsible development. Bluffton has done a series of edits. The department feels that in the interest of time, it would like to adopt those edits countywide to closely reflect what Bluffton has done. The department would like to make sure it has an updated format of the manual online that is not a draft format and is fully vetted and corrected. This should expedite the process versus having a third party look at it. Mr. Feinberg asked if the partners would be a third-party observer or hiring a firm to look at the manual. Ms. Brewer stated that the intent was to hire a firm to look at it for the manual to stand on its own. Also, the department will make sure that legally all the jargon is correct and enforceable.

- Projects:
  - **Alljoy Community.** The draft contract for Seeman Whiteside is still under review by RIA. Ms. Brewer has had a discussion with the grant personnel discussing the unfair timeline for the consultant. She has asked for and has been verbally granted an extension through April 2026. When a written confirmation is provided Ms. Brewer will let the Board know.

- **Bay Pines.** Maintenance shelf is completed, clearing and grading is complete, hydroseeding and installation of fence are the next steps. The second phase is to do a drainage study. The department has brought in Mr. Jeff Netzing from Hilton Head and had a discussion with Woolpert about their input and input. Mr. Netzing had a lot of historical knowledge that was helpful in realizing some things that may not have been considered in the model, such as outfall is completely clogged every time Ms. Brewer has been there, however the model described it as not an issue. Woolpert has gone back to the drawing board to make some tweaks in the model and then rerun the design storms to see if they can come up with a scenario where the model shows the outfall being blocked on the ground.
- **Shell Point.** There has been no movement on this project. Mr. Feinberg asked if J Bragg had the meeting that was requested; Ms. Brewer stated that she believes there have been several meetings since the requested meeting. Ms. Brewer stated there were talks by the firm producing a design for the Hamrick Drive outfall and paying for that out of the grant that was applied for; and continuing with the grant for the rest of the area with a different contractor. Mr. Ross asked who the meeting had been held with. Ms. Brewer stated the meetings were with J. Bragg and upper Administration. Mr. Ross stated that this project is just painfully slow, and the common denominator always comes back to J. Bragg. Mr. Ross stated he thought at one point J. Bragg had been removed from this project for being non-responsive, but now without explanation they are back on the project again. Mr. Ross asked why this firm cannot be removed. Mr. Harriott said that the decision was made above him, and we are continuing with J. Bragg. Mr. Ross asked if the Council Members, Ms. Brown and Mr. Reitz, could find an answer to this question. Ms. Brewer stated that the intention was that they are working on other projects in the area and it would be nice if those projects would tie together and be done by the same contractor. Mr. Ross stated to have citizens struggle for many years is unfair and unacceptable. He stated the decision must come to either appease the contractor or appease the community. Ms. Brewer stated she would push for an update on this project.

Mr. Mitchell asked if J. Bragg was the consultant or the engineer on the project. Ms. Brewer confirmed they are the consulting engineer on the project. Mr. Mitchell asked if this project is in addition to what the county has already paid them to do. Ms. Brewer stated it would be an additional fee and it's the design for Hamrick Drive specifically. Mr. Feinberg stated that he didn't understand what happened initially in this project to cause it to be so delayed. . Mr. Feinberg stated that Ms. Brown had asked Mr. Jared Fralix to come to speak before the Board on the matter.

Mr. Feinberg stated to Mr. Fralix that the Board has questions about the Shell Point project and its relationship with J. Bragg. He stated this has been a languishing project on the list of projects for Stormwater for some time now. The board would like to know why J Bragg is still involved if they were the cause of the major delay. Mr. Fralix gave a backstory on the project. The study was performed and identified some areas by Cranston. After the recommendations were received, RFQ was done in which J. Bragg was the qualified firm selected to implement, design and permit those recommendations. In going through the process there was some interaction with the J. Bragg's team and how we make improvements on some of the DOT right of way. DOT has different drainage standards and design that weren't accounted for in the study. This led to issues and delays. J. Bragg was awarded the contract for \$800,000 –\$850,000 in contract value. Task orders have been issued up to that threshold, we haven't expended that much. There has been some time delay trying to figure out what parts of the study were appropriate or if anything needed to be redone. We did some maintenance projects and some preliminary projects. We have bid and rebid some sections of drainage ditches that were going to get improved. What we are doing right now is working through a proposal that J Bragg offered for a specific portion of the overall drainage study,

Hamrick Drive drainage, outfall as well as some improvements behind the Food Lion detention pond. We have a proposal for that task order under \$850,000. If we can't come to terms with that task and there's going to a point where we have gone as far as we can go under that contract with J. Bragg. We are going to move forward with that which would be the culmination of that contract and purchase order.

Mr. Feinberg asked if Cranston was the consulting firm that looked at what J. Bragg had proposed. Mr. Fralix explained that Cranston was the initial firm that the county hired to do the study and overall drainage system. We put out the scope of work to include the initial drainage study and the scope for the permitting and construction plans.

Mr. Ross asked how long the county has had a relationship with J. Bragg. Mr. Fralix stated that he believes 2020 may have been their first contract, being the sales tax contract. Mr. Fralix explained that they are a relatively new company. Mr. Ross asked what the track record of completing jobs has been on other projects because we need someone who will act. His concern is for the citizens of that community who are suffering because of these delays. Mr. Fralix stated that there have been projects that have taken a long time that were not attributed to J. Bragg. We are working through the scope of the Hamrick Drive area which will bring finality to the scope inside Shell Point area.

Mr. Mitchell stated that the last time the Board was briefed on this matter, he recalled being told whatever work J. Bragg had done was not correct. Ms. Brewer explained that the information was for Cranston's work. Mr. Harriott stated that there were issues with the Cranston study that was not going to work. Mr. Fralix stated that the work was not incorrect but simply that the improvements fell within DOT right of way. Some of the design recommendations that were put forth by Cranston would not work with DOT.

- **Rivers End, Okatie.** The subdivision has a doubled layered system that is mixed with RCP and plastic pipe. Woolpert has been given the task order to design stamped plans that will restore that system to an open ditch system on top. The bottom drainage system will be replaced and then have bioswales planted on top of the system. This project has a pond as well; we intend to do an education signage pathway around the pond in phase two of this project.
- **Tuxedo Park.** This is a pond dredge project. The dredging is complete, and the pavement is supposed to be replaced this week.
- **Hickory Hill.** This is a piping project in which we are piping in a ditch system. Contractors will be on site next week to complete this project.
- **Okatie River Pond Dam.** The Geotech report has been completed, and we have verified that the dam is not regulated by DES. The stamped plans are underway. This project is a revamping of the dam for a Passive Parks project. It has a due date of July 30.
- **Royal Pines.** A study has been done that didn't yield any feasible proposed solutions for that area. It has been proposed that we investigate the feasibility of a buyout program for Stormwater using Stormwater Utility Funds. When a property is inundated by Stormwater it could be beneficial to enhancing our system overall, we would be able to purchase the property and then turn it into some sort of Stormwater BMP. We are looking into partnering with Greenspace (50/50) which will allow for covenants to be placed on the land that would prevent it from being developed in the future.
- **Arthur Horne.** 17-acre wetland in Port Royal Area in a neighborhood. The wetlands were knocked down during Hurricane Matthew. We are attempting to rejuvenate this wetlands area, which had a dock, as the amenity it once was for the neighborhood. This would be a

two-phase project; the first phase would be to restore drainage, and the second would be an amenity like Rivers End. We would like a pathway around the wetlands area and possibly getting the pond certified as a duck impoundment. Mr. Mitchell asked if the RFQ has been posted. Ms. Brewer confirmed that this has been posted and will be ending soon.

- Professional Contracts Update: Woolpert currently as our on-call A&E Stormwater Services. Their task order-based contract expires in October of this year. The department is pleased with their work. The department will be putting this contract out for RFP, and we have been instructed to have three firms on call for a variety of different services.
- Staff Update: We have a new Stormwater Project Manager, Jacob Bratz. He was formally introduced to the Board.

**5. Unfinished Business: None**

**6. New Business:**

**Additional Comments from the Board:**

- Mr. Ross stated that he had a few questions. Alljoy project –Mr. Ross asked if Matt Krause been actively engaged with this project, especially from the SCDOT building of the roadway and the walkway. Mr. Harriott stated he gets updates from Engineering. Mr. Ross stated the roadway project was identified as one of the projects in the 2018 Sales Tax Referendum. As far back as 2021 the Alljoy residents have opposed a bike path and have even had a petition stating that fact, yet the county felt that they needed to go forward. This all was proved even though the residents who live there and have been dealing with flooding and stormwater problems for a long time – the State decided to rebuild the road and put in a walkway; however, they won't put down anything but pervious substance because they don't want to maintain anything impervious. Is there anything that can be done with the SCDOT to see if there will be the ability for the county to perhaps even subcontract that path or that walkway to a natural type of environment, a nature trail, so that it won't add to the problem Alljoy already has? Mr. Harriott stated that he would need to speak with the Engineering Department. Ms. Brown stated she would bring the matter up to County Council in the Liaison Report.

SOLOCO Manual – SOLOCO manual and Comprehensive Resiliency Plan must work together. We must fix these items completely so that work without revisions being made continuously.

Mr. Feinberg stated that with respect to the pathway/sidewalk bike path, he would like to make a motion from the Board stating that the Board disagrees with the decision of the county's Engineering Department to approve the permit to have an impervious walk/bikeway along Alljoy Road. The decision to have an impervious surface is not in keeping with the current best management practices known as BMPs for the control and containment of stormwater runoff. This is extremely important since the potential stormwater will carry pollutants near the May River. Mr. Feinberg stated he would like to have that motion approved by this Board so that it could be sent to Council for their next meeting. The motion was seconded by Mr. Buchanan; the motion was unanimously voted on in the affirmative.

**7. Public Comment:**

- Jim Lawton – 52 Oyster Street, Bluffton. This Board is one of the most consequential boards in this county as we are a water bound county. We have three large municipalities and a marine base within this county. The great majority of this county is rural, unincorporated. We don't want one big urban sprawl. The issues with county Engineering are abysmal. We want a transparent government, and we are not getting it except with this Board. Why are the comments of Alljoy residents being ignored? Does the county want the community to be pushed into Bluffton? The community does not want that. We want our boat landing for our community. We don't want a major playground for Sun City or anyone else. Will we be listened to? You

are the only Board that genuinely does. I will be speaking at Council on Monday, but it is astounding that Engineering does not listen to us at all. The beach is a mess, and the community feels the county does care about the residents. Mr. Lawton stated that the lack of deputy patrol cars is distressing. The houses on the front row are in danger due to Stormwater issues. He is supported of Spartina grass and some sort of swimming beach.

- Ms. Brown stated that the budget was approved infusing the Sheriff's Department, allowing them to hire more deputies. Hopefully this will alleviate the issues with patrolling in the Alljoy area.
- Mr. Reitz thanked Mr. Lawton for this history of the area. He stated that regarding Stormwater there are a lot of areas that were unaddressed in the Bluffton area, Bay Pines, etc. Since August 2024 remarkable work has been done to address issues. He stated that an island wide master plan is being developed. All councilmen need to be for the people and not their districts. He asked that the Board keep him informed so that he can help move the county forward.
- Ms. Wilson stated she has a letter from Engineering, Brittney Fields, from June 20, 2021, stating that the pathway was never intended for Alljoy, but for Shad community. Two virtual meetings were held moving that pathway to Alljoy. SCDOT stated the only reason they are using impervious material is because the county doesn't want to maintain it. She thanked the Board for putting forth a motion to please stop the concrete. It feels like the residents have been the only people to advocate for this community. She is very concerned that the residents' needs are just not going to be heard. Ms. Wilson thanked the Board for listening.

**8. ADJORNMENT:** Meeting adjourned at 3:21 PM.