

Mayor's Report September 5, 2023

The primary focus for the month of August was continued efforts to improve the seawall area.

In early August the Village assisted by the Town of Huntington Highway Department, led by Superintendent Andre Sorrentino, did a repair to the two sinkhole areas. Approximately 173 tons of rock were added to the wall in an effort to strengthen it for the upcoming hurricane and nor'easter season. The project will be paid for by utilizing part of a \$50,000 grant that State Assemblyman Keith Brown secured for the Village. The total cost of the project was \$10,106.65 for the materials and \$8160 for GEI's engineering fees. This leaves the Village approximately \$32,708.35 that can use as needed for future repairs until the grant expires on May 5, 2026. The Village deemed it prudent to keep a reserve for now as any future comprehensive reconstruction of the wall and beach are probably years away. Until then it is likely that parts of the wall will need to be fixed.

On Thursday August 24th Deputy Mayor Pam Pierce, Clerk Michelle Glennon and I had a kickoff meeting with Christa Hay from the NYS Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services to discuss the \$1,000,000 Hazard Mitigation Grant for Sea Wall Shoreline/Rehabilitation that was awarded to the Village in July. This money funds the Village to engage an engineering firm to review the entire seawall area, including the beach, and come up with a comprehensive reconstruction design. The Village expects to start writing up a Request for Proposal for engineers in the next few months.

The Village continued to work with the NYS DOT to finalize the FAPP form in order to go forward with the \$1,000,000 earmark that was secured for Asharoken by Senator Chuck Schumer. This money is for construction to rebuild the most deteriorated section of the wall. The Village next week will interview an engineering firm to assist it with completion of the FAPP form as well as working on RFPs for both of these projects.

During the month I wrote to Town of Huntington Supervisor Ed Smyth and the members of the Town Board requesting that the Town assist Asharoken in paying for the local share of the earmark and grant. The maximum local share of the grant is \$107,000 and the local share of the earmark is \$250,000. These numbers will be lower if not all of the monies are used. I also spoke with State Senator Matera and Assemblyman Brown to request NYS assistance for the local share cost. Although the Village has sufficient funds in a reserve account to cover these costs, it will do all it can to get the Town and State to be financial partners as well.

Deputy Mayor Pierce and I participated in a very productive conference call with Assemblyman Brown and people from the Village of Northport and the Town of Huntington. This call covered the seawall as well as Village of Northport and Town of Huntington projects. The Village of Northport was able to share the name of their engineer who I hope will be able to work with Asharoken to complete the DOT paperwork and help with the two RFPs for seawall engineering and construction. Overall, it was a very productive call.

At last Friday's seawall meeting Village Resident John Ross's asserted that, according to Jason Shea of the USACOE, the ACOE would consider overseeing a reconstruction of just the seawall area. In an effort to verify this I emailed Jason Shea. I informed Mr. Shea of what John Ross said and asked Mr. Shea to provide a good time when Mr. Ross, Assemblyman Keith Brown and myself could speak and get more details. Today I received an email reply and I quote, "I have not stated USACE's support, or lack thereof, for any specific plan. The USACE position has not changed since the study was terminated in February 2020." The ACOE's position is that it will only fix the seawall area if it is part of a restoration of the entire beach from the power plant to the seawall. This plan was overwhelmingly turned down by the Village residents in 2016 because of the public beach access requirements. Mr. Shea went on to say that, "What I did communicate is that USACE would come to the table to discuss possible paths forward but this request must come through NYSDEC."

Deputy Mayor Pierce and I attended a meeting sponsored by State Senator Matera at the seawall last week. The purpose of the meeting was to have Rob Caralacco, head of District 1 of the NYSDEC, visit the site and give us his input as to what we could expect going forward. The take away message was that reconstruction of a beach in front of the wall was likely the best solution and that hard structures like breakwaters were very unlikely to be approved.

During the month I also had a chance to have a brief conversation about the seawall with Matt Chelbus from the NYSDEC. We agreed to talk again after the Labor Day weekend.

The Village received bids on its decommissioned Crown Victoria police car during the month. There is a resolution on the agenda to accept the highest bid.

I would like to thank the Huntington Highway Department for helping the Village by fixing numerous pot holes on Bevin Road. The Village has decided to hold off repaving until next spring. An advantage to waiting is that the Village will receive another deposit from NYS into its CHIPS account to pay for greater share of the project.