

COUNCILMEMBER REPORTS AND COMMENTS

Councilmember Lundstrom reported the Association of Bay Area Governments recently released projections for cities and counties in the Bay Area. They project that Larkspur's population will grow to 30,000 over the next twenty-five years, including 1,500 people near the Ferry Terminal. She stated there was new State legislation that would allow for more State control over local governments in terms of planning, particularly near transit areas. She would like to send Supervisors Hal Brown and Steve Kinsey a copy of the Planning Director's letter that was sent to ABAG.

Councilmember Hillmer stated Councilmember Lundstrom's concern was amplified given the JPA that is being proposed regarding the Community Choice Aggregation (CCA) issue. This JPA is supposed to help cities comply with SB 375 mandates that target climate change but implementation encourages high-density development around transit areas through a relief from CEQA requirements. Larkspur will be under pressure from neighboring communities to take part in the JPA that could, in turn, try to dictate Larkspur's land use decisions. They need to make sure that Larkspur's interests are protected.

Mayor Hartzell stated she met with Mr. Bret Richards, newly appointed District Manager for Sanitary District #1, and discussed some pertinent issues. Mr. Richards expressed a desire to work cooperatively with Larkspur.

ELECTION OF MAYOR AND VICE MAYOR

- Presentation by new Mayor to Kathy Hartzell commemorating her term as Mayor
- Presentation by the Larkspur Association of Volunteer Firefighters to the new Mayor

M/s, Chu/Arlas and approved 5-0 to elect Councilmember Lundstrom as Vice-Mayor.

M/s, Lundstrom/Arlas and approved 5-0 to elect Councilmember Hillmer as Mayor.

Mayor Hillmer thanked Councilmember Hartzell for her year of service as Mayor and presented her with a few gifts. He read a proclamation in honor of Councilmember Hartzell and announced that December 3rd was hereby "Kathy Hartzell Day in Larkspur".

Councilmember Hartzell thanked the Council for the opportunity of guiding the Centennial Celebration and thanked the individuals on the Steering Committee. She briefly discussed some of the achievements for the year: 1) A successful court settlement; 2) the passage of Measure E; 3) renovation of Centennial Park; 4) the start of a resolution to the theft of recycling; 5) controls on wood burning

fixtures; 5) continued work on the Street Planting Program; 6) further greening of City Hall.

Mr. Brian Costello, incoming President of the Larkspur Association of Volunteer Firefighters, presented Mayor Hillmer with a gavel.

Mayor Hillmer noted they were facing some difficult economic times in the next several years, however the City is in a strong financial position and has a balanced budget. He thanked the City Manager, City Attorney, and all the department heads.

The City Council took a 15-minute break at 8:05 p.m.

The meeting reconvened at 8:20 p.m.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no comments.

BUSINESS ITEMS

1. PRESENTATION OF THE ANNUAL AUDIT BY MAZE AND ASSOCIATES

The City Manager presented the staff report.

Mr. Tim Kirsch, CPA with Maze and Associates, thanked the Finance Director and staff for their assistance in the audit. He stated the City of Larkspur is in a very solid financial position. The audit of the City's financial statements, which included two phases, resulted in an unqualified, or clean opinion. This is the highest level of assurance. There were no material weaknesses or significant deficiencies. Internal controls are in place and are being followed.

Councilmember Chu referred to GASB 45, regarding disclosure of post employment benefits, and asked if there would be any future policy discussions by the Council about funding. The City Manager stated "yes" and added the City, due to its size, is one of the last of the entities that would need to do the GASB 45 calculations. Staff has taken a position of trying to reduce the future actuarial load and obligation through employee negotiations. The requirement is to simply recognize the obligation. Councilmember Chu stated the choice of whether or not to fund the obligation would affect the City's credit rating. He thanked the Finance Director, the Payroll Technician, and the City Manager for keeping the City in the black and for continuously providing three months worth of working capital in reserves.

Councilmember Lundstrom noted the firm of Maze and Associates sends a different auditing team each year to provide "fresh eyes".

Councilmember Hartzell referred to a phrase “unqualified opinion” used by Mr. Krish and noted she could not find it in the documents. Mr. James Holmes, Madrone Avenue, stated the wording in the first sentence of the third paragraph on page 1 describes an “unqualified opinion”.

Councilmember Hartzell referred to page 27, Statement of Revenues, Expenditures and Changes in Fund Balance, “Other Financing Sources”, line item “Transfers In and Out” and asked about the change in the figure from the “Final” to “Actual” amounts. The City Manager stated she would have to ask the Finance Director but she thought it had to do with Capital Fund transfers and grant reimbursements. Mr. Kirsch agreed and noted it was a timing issue.

Mayor Hillmer referred to the need to fund Measure E and asked staff about the City’s current long-term indebtedness. The City Manager discussed the work that would need to be done to relocate the Corporation Yard and stated it would cost about \$5 to \$6 million. The amount would be less because of the payment from the Town of Corte Madera towards the Twin Cities Police Facility. The Council has authorized staff to market any excess City property that is not being used. The challenge would be the timing and the cost of borrowing. The City will incur long-term obligations but it is also a long-term investment to the City’s infrastructure. The final payment for the Fire Station in Greenbrae, Larkspur’s only other long-term debt, would be made in March, 2009. All of the rest of the City’s debt is short-term.

Mayor Hillmer stated the Larkspur finance staff also handles the finances of the Ross Valley Paramedic Authority, the Twin Cities Police Authority, and the Larkspur Marina Financing Authority.

Mayor Hillmer opened the meeting to public comments.

There were no comments. Mayor Hillmer closed the meeting to public comments.

M/s, Chu/Hartzell and approved 5-0 to accept the Annual 2007-08 Audit.

2. DISCUSSION OF:

- A. DOHERTY DRIVE LANE CONFIGUARTION- MAGNOLIA TO REDWOOD HIGH SCHOOL, AND
- B. DOHERTY DRIVE BRIDGE AND BON AIR ROAD BRIDGE ARCHITECTURAL CONCEPTS, AND
- C. DOHERTY DRIVE BRIDGE AND BON AIR ROAD BRIDGE CONSTRUCTION ALTERNATIVES

The Public Works Director presented the staff report.

Mr. Andy Hill, representing MacDonald Architects, made a Powerpoint presentation. He noted both bridge designs had gone through significant changes through collaboration with the community and direction of the Council. The designs are intended to bring out the features of the natural surroundings including Mt. Tamalpais and the marsh wetlands. The designs are organic, natural, and simple. He discussed the Doherty Drive Bridge design and stated the width of the bridge has been increased to accommodate a median and 10-foot left-turn lane. The 12-foot wide, Class I multi-use path on the south side is basically a two-way bike lane plus a pedestrian walkway. Mayor Hillmer noted the width of the bridge was an important architectural feature. The Public Works Director agreed and stated it could be widened in the range of 3 to 10 feet of the existing width. Mr. Hill stated they were going with an organic, natural theme with a lot of curvature in the bridge, the railing, and the pavement pattern. Mayor Hillmer asked if the texture of the pavement patterns were a result of saw cuts and whether or not it would hinder bicyclists. Mr. Hill stated it should not be a problem since they would be small reveals in the surface. The Public Works Director stated they would be 1/8th of an inch score marks. Councilmember Arlas questioned the value of this detail. Mr. Hill stated it was an architectural, aesthetic detail that sets the bridge apart from the roadway. Mayor Hillmer stated he would like to make sure the design choices they make preserve the qualities of simplicity, reinforce the views to the landscape from the bridge, and discourage any safety hazards. He asked if the geometry of the bridge, including the curved, concrete structure, discouraged skateboarding, etc. The Public Works Director stated he did not think it would be a problem.

Councilmember Lundstrom stated the proposed pavement pattern was a new feature and the Council should discuss it. Councilmember Hartzell stated she liked concrete that had “something going on” and thought it was a great idea. The curved concrete part of the bridge could include some features that would prevent it from being a “launching pad”.

Councilmember Chu stated he would like to discourage any unsafe activities. He referred to the pavement pattern and stated he would like to keep it simple. This is a very short bridge and it takes about 10 seconds to cross. He would like to keep the costs down. He was more concerned about sight lines.

Councilmember Arlas agreed with the comment that safety was a priority. He noted the bridge was as wide as it is long and he did not want to spend a lot of money. He would like to keep it safe and simple.

Councilmember Lundstrom stated they need to keep maintenance, drainage, and replacement issues in mind. The railing is the strength of this design and she would rather see a plain, simple surface for the pavement.

Mayor Hillmer opened the meeting to public comments.

Ms. Helen Heitkamp, Elm Avenue, stated she was concerned that the plans depict a view from the water and not what drivers would see. The public would not see the curved base of the bridge. Mr. Hill stated they could create that rendering for the Council to view.

The Planning Director noted the scoring in the pavement, if not done correctly, could be a problem for someone in a wheelchair.

Mr. Jeff Stahl, Chevy Chase Court, stated he was speaking as a resident tonight. He noted another feature that is not depicted on the plans is the barrier between the roadway and the sidewalks and bike paths. He stated the barrier would be a 1 ½-foot tall curb with a pipe rail above it. This could filter the view from a vehicle. He acknowledged that this was a short bridge but it is also a “gateway” to the City and they should celebrate the natural surroundings, including the creek. The concrete pattern is not that exotic and would include some simple saw cuts on a flat surface. It is a creative idea that he would like the Council to consider. There are a lot of details that need to be worked out to make it as good a bridge as it can be. Ms. Heitkamp’s point about how the bridge will be seen from the driver’s point of view was very important. He feels that the bridge should act as a “giant speed bump” along Doherty Drive and he was worried that widening the road would be an invitation to drive too fast. He would like to see a textured surface on the roadbed and a crown to the bridge in the direction of travel. He noted the design could be more modern.

Ms. Matthew Friedrickson, Lower Via Casitas and Redwood High School student, stated they should not worry about kids skateboarding on the railing or the curved portion of the bridge. He did not think it would be a safety issue.

Mr. Dwayne Price, Elm Avenue, agreed with the comments made by Mr. Stahl.

Mr. James Holmes, Madrone Avenue, stated he liked the design and the curves would appear like “semi-pyramids” when viewed from head on. The lights on the top are very nice and the rails are low enough to avoid a “cage” effect. They are also too thin to be used by skateboarders. The style is a mix of Victorian and Art Deco and would be consistent with the design of the Bon Air Bridge but not the Alexander Avenue Bridge. He is concerned about the maintenance of the metal railings. On the whole, the design is very attractive. This bridge is not too short to care about and is a gateway to the city. The concrete pattern for the sidewalk is a bit too “curly” and it should be simplified.

Mayor Hillmer closed the meeting to public comments.

Councilmember Arlas stated he would like to see a view from the driver’s perspective. He referred to the plan view and noted the curved base would not appear too thick. He asked about the width. The Public Works Director stated it would be about 2 feet wide. The base of the light was about 18 inches.

Mayor Hillmer referred to the elevation and stated he would like to see a more graceful, refined way for the base of the lamppost to meet the ground, with perhaps a separation of the wall. It currently looks like the bottom of a monument sign.

Councilmember Hartzell agreed. She liked the railing and would like to see a detail and an elevation from the driver's perspective. She discussed the architectural relationship between the lamppost and the bridge and stated she would like to see a reduction in the height of the lamppost. She asked about the purpose of the multi-use path and asked if it would be used by bikes and pedestrians. The Public Works Director stated "yes" but it would probably not be heavily used by bicyclists.

Councilmember Chu referred to the comments made by Mr. Stahl and agreed that there were other safety issues related to speed. The proposed width of the travel lanes is similar to those on a freeway.

Councilmember Lundstrom summarized the comments made by the Council: 1) they want to see more proportion in the end element (the base and the lamppost) and how it would be viewed from the roadway; 2) they would like to see the railing detail; 3) they would prefer a plain surface for the pathway, keeping in mind ADA regulations. She would like to keep things simple.

Mr. Hill discussed the Bon Air Bridge design and stated the look of the railing and the light fixtures would be similar to those proposed for the Doherty Drive Bridge. They are proposing four belvederes at the central points of the bridge to serve as resting spots. They are also proposing bench seating around the light posts that are encircled by pedestals. There is a radius curve under the deck surface which softens the hard, concrete transition across the creek.

Mayor Hillmer stated the Council had asked for the elimination of the belvederes at the last presentation. He would like to see the same number of lights that currently exist to avoid further light pollution.

Councilmember Arlas stated he was strongly opposed to the belvederes and the pedestals because teenagers would use them as a diving platform. The railing would not stop this unsafe activity. He stated the Council had expressed a desire to minimize the number of columns in the water since they collect debris that floats down the creek. He would prefer to see two sets of columns. The structural engineer stated the bridge was 500 feet and has four sets of columns. They could eliminate the belvederes and design the bridge with two sets of columns. This could not be reduced further without either raising the bridge or making the structure deeper below. The bridge currently has a low profile. Mayor Hillmer stated the removal of the belvederes would make it lighter and safer.

Councilmember Hartzell asked if the elevation of the bridge would remain the same. The structural engineer stated “yes”.

Mayor Hillmer opened the meeting to public comments.

There were no comments. Mayor Hillmer closed the meeting to public comments.

Councilmember Arlas thanked the structural engineer for his explanation and stated he could support the proposal for four columns. He liked the basic, simple design and the railings. He was not in favor of the belvederes or the architectural platforms for the lights. He asked if they could find a way to reduce the lighting.

Councilmember Chu agreed with Councilmember Arlas. He would like the same number of lights that currently exists. He understood the reason for the number of columns.

Councilmember Hartzell agreed with Councilmember Arlas. She liked the railings and the design of the historic lampposts. She would like to see the same number of lampposts that currently exists and suggested using some ground lighting (LED’s) for the bicyclists and pedestrians.

Councilmember Lundstrom agreed with the comments made by the other Councilmembers. She wanted to eliminate the belvederes, liked the railing, and would like the same number of lampposts that currently exist.

Mayor Hillmer referred to the end elements and stated they should be similar to the ones described for the Doherty Drive Bridge- a pilaster with a wall coming into it. He would like to see lights at the four main pier locations only. He would not mind seeing the railing interrupted by the light fixtures and perhaps some other type of lighting as suggested by Councilmember Hartzell. Councilmember Arlas stated that was a great idea but there were very few people walking the bridge at night. The City Manager stated there could be some type of motion detection system or a pedestrian button tied into this ground lighting.

The Public Works Director discussed the Doherty Drive lane configuration. He stated staff is recommending alternative #1.

Mayor Hillmer stated he could not support closure of the roadways during construction of these bridges. The Council agreed. The Public Works Director noted that would double the length of time for construction.

Councilmember Hartzell asked if the Class I Bike Lane was synonymous with a multi-use path.

The Public Works Director stated “yes”. Councilmember Hartzell asked why staff was proposing both a bike lane and a multi-use path on the south side. She asked about the location of the paths in relation to the Liquid Amber trees. The Public Works Director stated the multi-use path would be on the south side of the Liquid Ambers. He stated it was a good idea to provide a bike lane separate from a pedestrian path. He added they have the luxury of the right-of-way.

Councilmember Chu asked if there was a specific standard requiring a 12-foot travel lane. He noted it seemed wide for a 25 mile per hour zone and asked if it could be reduced to 11 feet. The Public Works Director stated it was possible to reduce the width but the traffic engineer is recommending 12 feet. The traffic engineer for the Niven property development, stated they could narrow the travel lanes but not below 10 feet. Councilmember Chu a 10-foot travel lane would be adequate for the bridge and would serve as a traffic-calming device. The Public Works Director stated the travel lane width should be consistent throughout the entire roadway.

The Public Works Director referred to the proposed medians and asked if the Council would like to see them landscaped or hardscaped. Mayor Hillmer stated the image of the median would be the image of the bridge and was a very significant element. He wondered if the medians were necessary. He asked if the intersection at into Piper Park would be signalized. The Public Works Director stated “no”. Mayor Hillmer asked how the movement within the intersection would be coordinated. He wondered if the turn lanes were necessary given the anticipated volume of traffic. The median is not wide enough to accommodate any significant landscaping and he would not want to see a median of hardscape. The Public Works Director noted the median would be 10-feet wide and something could be planted.

Councilmember Lundstrom stated this was the intersection leading to the Twin Cities Police Facility, Piper Park, and Hall Middle School on the north side and the Niven property development, which would include a Community Facility, on the south side. These are the elements that need to be considered when discussing turn lanes, signalization, etc. The Public Works Director noted there would be service trucks (garbage, etc.) coming in and out of the new development.

Councilmember Arlas stated he appreciated Councilmember Lundstrom’s comments and would not be in favor of narrowing the lanes. He referred to Sheet 2, and asked about the space in between the two medians. The Public Works Director stated that helped accommodate access in and out of Hall Middle School. Councilmember Arlas stated the medians might not be necessary. He referred to Sheet #1, “new bridge section” diagram, and had questions about the measurements and why there was no barrier between the bike path and the sidewalk on the north side. The traffic engineer for the Niven property stated the multi-use path must be separated by a physical barrier.

The bike path on the north side is not a Class I path. Mayor Hillmer asked if there was a minimum width to the barrier. The traffic engineer stated he was not sure. Councilmember Hartzell asked about the rationale for the turn lanes and the lack of a signal. The traffic engineer stated he was hired by the developer to do a conceptual design of the Larkspur Plaza Drive and Piper Park intersections and do a signal warrant analysis. He has recommended installing a signal at Larkspur Plaza Drive because of the student/pedestrian traffic. In addition, it would improve traffic conditions along Doherty Drive. A signal at the entrance to Piper Park was not warranted since there were not a lot of pedestrian crossings. He noted the driveway leading to the Larkspur Boardwalk would have to be addressed. Mayor Hillmer stated the driveway could "T" into Larkspur Plaza Drive.

Mayor Hillmer opened the meeting to public comments.

Ms. Nancy Weninger, Elm Avenue, discussed the need for a Class I and Class II Bike Path since there were many different kinds of bicyclists. She stated there was a lot to like in the plan compared to the current condition of the road. The best feature is the continuous Class II Bike Path on the north side. She was disappointed this did not also occur on the south side and stated it could be accomplished by eliminating the medians. She is bothered by the change to eliminate the Class II path on the bridge. The Public Works Director stated the medians provide a smooth transition to the turn lanes.

Mr. James Holmes, Madrone Avenue, stated Mr. Stahl raised a good question regarding the appearance of the barrier and he noted it could cut off the visual appearance through the bridge. He stated the travel lanes should not be reduced below 11 feet. He would like a simple and easy lane configuration to avoid problems.

Mr. Dwayne Price stated bicyclists would use the bridge whether or not there is a bike lane and this could cause problems.

Mayor Hillmer asked if the eastbound bike lane could be maintained at a Class II width on the bridge. The Public Works Director stated "yes" but he was also trying to provide the other amenities. He asked if the Council would approve a widening of the bridge as indicated earlier.

Councilmember Lundstrom stated the existing eastbound lane was 20 feet and the westbound lane was 15'5". Reducing the width would certainly slow down traffic and the proposed 12 feet width was acceptable. Suddenly eliminating a bike lane was not a good idea and she could support the new bike section.

Councilmember Hartzell stated she did not understand the need for a right turn lane heading west into Piper Park since there was no impediment or stacking up of vehicles.

She also questioned the need for a left turn lane into the Niven development since drivers could continue up Doherty Drive to the signal at Larkspur Plaza Drive. She understood the need for the left turn lane, heading east, into Piper Park and for the medians. She preferred Alternative #3 and stated it would provide the Class II bike lane across the bridge.

Councilmember Lundstrom stated she preferred Alternative #1 depicting the left turn into Piper Park and a left turn into the Niven property and the proposed Community Facility. She was not sure the right turn lane into Piper Park was necessary.

Councilmember Chu referred to Alternative #1 and stated he understood the need for the right turn lane into Piper Park. This would allow for a free flow of traffic during Hall Middle School drop off and pick up hours. He would like to see the travel lanes reduced to at least 11 feet to reduce speeding. He would like to see a continuation of the Class II Bike Lane across the bridge and would support a wider bridge.

Councilmember Arlas agreed with Councilmember Lundstrom. He reiterated that this is a very short bridge and trying to constrict it was useless. He was not concerned about the width of the bridge. He preferred Alternative #1 with the left turn lanes. He would like to see the medians eliminated. He wanted to keep things simple for an easy flow of traffic.

Mayor Hillmer stated Alternative #1 was the closest to optimizing what is needed along that roadway. He would like to see the medians reduced and suggested extending the left turn lane back into the bridge.

The Public Works Director stated he would prefer to keep the left turn lane into the Niven property since they do not know the type of demand that will occur in the future.

Mayor Hillmer stated the consensus was to support Alternative #1 with a reduction in the median, flexibility in the width of the bridge, and a continuation of the Class II Bike Lane across the bridge

ADJOURNMENT

The Mayor adjourned the meeting at 11:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Toni DeFrancis
Recording Secretary