

The Council might need to hold a Special Closed Session meeting in the next couple of weeks regarding Real Property Negotiations and Personnel.

COUNCILMEMBER REPORTS AND COMMENTS

Mayor Hillmer reported he, along with Councilmember Lundstrom, met yesterday with the project team for the Twin Cities Police Facility and the Larkspur Corporation Yard. It was a very effective meeting. There may be alternatives that would keep the majority of the temporary Corporation Yard out of Piper Park to lessen the impacts. The Tamalpais Union High School District (TUHSD) Board of Directors is enthusiastic about moving forward. The City Manager noted the alternatives would be presented to the Council soon. Councilmember Lundstrom stated District has been very forward thinking and open-minded during this process about the use of its property which includes a 2,000 square foot office. Mayor Hillmer commended staff for its creative collaboration in working with the District and for focusing on efficiency, cost effective sharing, and what the community wants. Councilmember Lundstrom noted the alternatives would be reviewed by the Parks and Recreation Commission at its September meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no comments.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

1. CITY COUNCIL REVIEW OF TWO ALTERNATIVES OF THE EXISTING ALEXANDER BRIDGE AND SELECTION OF THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE TO BE EVALUATED IN THE ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS

The Public Works Director presented the staff report. He presented a brief summary of the process and a history of the bridge.

Mr. Bob Cermak, representing Parsons Brinckerhoff, made a Powerpoint presentation including the following: 1) Larkspur Bridge Project- Alexander Avenue Bridge; 2) Alternative Evaluation Criteria; 3) Alexander Avenue Bridge; 4) Recent Process; 5) Alternative 1- Retrofit/Rehabilitate Existing Bridge; 6) Retrofit Strategy; 7) Alternative 1B- Retrofit and Lower Existing Bridge; 8) Alternative 4- Complete Bridge Replacement; 8) Summary Comparison of Environmental Process; 9) Summary Comparison of Alternatives; 11) Summary Comparison of Costs and City's Share; 11) Questions and Answers. Mr. Cermak stated Alternative #1b is no longer being recommended since they would be doing major rehabilitation but not correcting all the existing deficiencies. The City would not be eligible for cost sharing with the Federal Government and would be responsible for all the costs.

Mr. Don McDonald, architect, presented the following bridge design concepts: 1) Alternative 4A- Proposed Bridge Replacement Design; 2) Alternative 4B- Proposed Bridge Replacement Design; 3) Alternative 4C- Proposed Bridge Replacement Design; 4) Alternative 4D- Proposed Bridge Replacement Design; 5) Alternative 4E- Proposed Bridge Replacement Design; 6) Alternative 4F- Proposed Bridge Replacement Design.

Ms. Debbie Loh, representing ICF Jones and Stokes, an environmental consulting firm, stated the project would be subject to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) because the City would like to use Federal funding. The project would also be subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The purpose of these laws is to fully disclose the potential environmental impacts of the project and to present mitigation measures. There is no requirement for the City to adopt the most environmentally friendly project. She referred to the slide that compared the environmental process for the retrofit vs. the replace alternatives. She stated the process would be simpler and take less time for the retrofit alternative. It was possible that the retrofit alternative could be handled under CEQA as a categorical exemption. Under NEPA, CalTrans would be acting as the Lead Agency and has indicated that the project could be cleared as a categorical exclusion. This is a little more complicated than the CEQA categorical exemption and requires the preparation of more technical studies. The exemption and exclusion are intended to clear one alternative and both would look at only the retrofit alternative and do not require any public review process. The remove and replace alternative would require the preparation of higher-level documents. There is case law under State law that says anytime an historic structure is demolished then the highest-level document must be prepared (an EIR). An environmental assessment would need to be prepared under NEPA. Both of these types of documents are alternative based and would identify a preferred alternatives with other alternatives reviewed at a comparative level. There is an option to adopt either alternative (retrofit or replacement) under this process. The remove/replacement alternative would trigger other laws that would require consultation with other agencies. The timeframe would be about 12 months. She briefly discussed Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.

Councilmember Hartzell had questions about the EIR process and the analysis of alternatives. Ms. Loh clarified that a categorical exemption and exclusion would probably be used for the retrofit alternative. Those processes clear that one alternative. A higher-level document would be needed for the replacement alternative and those are alternative based.

Councilmember Chu stated the current design was for a 36-ton vehicle and he asked if a new bridge could be designed for less tonnage at a cheaper cost. The structural engineer stated current code would not allow a reduction in the load limit if Federal funding were used.

Councilmember Chu referred to the slide titled "Summary Comparison of Costs and City's Share", maintenance costs, and stated they are assuming the \$600,000 is money the City already has and could be invested on a capital preservation basis and they would be able to bring the cash up based on the 4% inflation factor to the number of dollars that would be needed in the future. He stated since they do not have those dollars, the figure for the retrofit, by the end of the 75 years, would be \$2.1 million and would be between \$700,000 to under \$1 million for the replacement option. Mr. Cermak stated that was correct and they discounted the figures for comparison purposes to current dollars. Councilmember Chu stated the comparison could not be made if they do not have the cash.

Councilmember Chu stated the current retrofit would be done to a standard of non-collapse and the replacement option would be done to a more modern standard which is "repairable". The "repairable" standard has been recommended by engineers and the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) since 1996. The USGS defines a major earthquake as 6.7 magnitude or greater. If they do the retrofit and a major quake occurs then in all likelihood it would render the retrofitted bridge to the point of needing to be replaced. The cost of having to replace the retrofitted bridge has not been factored into the analysis. Mr. Cermak stated they are using a non-collapse design standard for both options. Councilmember Chu stated he had questions at the last meeting about the "repairable" vs. the "non-collapse" standard and noted the new structure would be under the moderate standard. The engineer stated new structures designed during the past 10 years generally get much less damage due to the design, materials used, etc. Depending on the structure that is picked, they could minimize the amount of damage. Councilmember Chu noted they were not going to the highest standard. The engineer stated it was not so much the highest standard but rather the type of structure (columns get damaged, etc.). Councilmember Chu stated the State has three different categories for retrofits- minimal, repairable, and significant (non-collapse). There is a different level of sustainability within each category built into the original design such that when a quake occurs the cost of repair and the duration in which the structure is out of service is much shorter. The engineer agreed and noted this structure would be retrofitted to the non-collapse standard since it is not a lifeline bridge such as the Golden Gate or Bay Bridge. Councilmember Chu stated the recommendation for an ordinary bridge is repairable. The engineer stated the goal is to design a bridge to sustain repairable damage. Councilmember Chu stated the difference between repairable and non-collapse were two totally different retrofit standards and the recommended standard was repairable which is the moderate level for an ordinary bridge. The engineer stated the new bridge would comply with that standard. This would not be done to the old bridge since there is a limit to what can be done. To bring the old bridge to that level would require a lot of work including excavation, foundation work, etc. Councilmember Chu reiterated that was his point and there was a substantial difference in the cost as a result of any catastrophic event that would make that bridge unusable or had to be replaced. This was not factored into the original figures. The engineer agreed.

Councilmember Lundstrom referred to the slide titled "Summary Comparison of Costs and City's Share" and stated the estimated maintenance costs assume that the bridge would not collapse during a sizable seismic event. Mr. Cermak agreed. She asked about the probability of having to build a new bridge after a sizable seismic event with the retrofit alternative. Mr. Cermak stated it was probable that a new bridge would need to be built under the retrofit alternative but not under the replacement alternative.

Councilmember Lundstrom asked if they would need approval under either alternative from the State Historic Preservation Office. Ms. Loh stated replacement of this historic structure would be considered an adverse effect and a Memorandum of Agreement would need to be negotiated with the State Historic Preservation Officer and approved by the State Historic Preservation Office. A retrofit would have to meet the Secretary of Interior standards but would not need the Memorandum of Agreement. However, documents would need to be created and approved by the State Historic Preservation Office.

Councilmember Arlas asked if the retrofit would change the appearance of the underside of the bridge and its historic nature. The engineer stated "yes". Councilmember Arlas noted there would need to be some major maintenance on the retrofitted bridge within 25 years or so leaving the arches the only remaining historic element. Mr. Cermak stated all of the elements together were considered historical. Councilmember Arlas asked if a new deck could be built on the retrofitted bridge. The engineer stated "yes". The arches would be supported underneath and they could then redo the deck. Councilmember Arlas asked if this could be done as a part of the retrofit. The engineer stated the deck was currently very porous and the plan would be to seal it to keep water from running down into the columns. This work would hold up for about 25 years. Councilmember Arlas stated the \$600,000 maintenance figure seemed very low. The engineer stated this was in today's dollars.

Mayor Hillmer opened the meeting to public comments

Mr. Phillip Terry, Diane Lane, stated he would like to keep the charm of the bridge and would prefer the retrofit alternative. This is a neighborhood and not a thoroughfare bridge and he did not want to see any increase in speed along that bridge. He asked about the statistics concerning the safety of the bridge. The narrowness of the bridge serves as a traffic-calming device. They need to preserve the small town atmosphere by preserving these charming, historic structures. He did not care if the retrofit alternative cost more money.

Ms. Julie Lichsel, Acacia Avenue, stated she agreed with the comments made by Mr. Terry. The charm of this area is defined by this bridge. The City should be looking at projects that are only absolutely necessary and is not mandated to make everything absolutely hazard free. She supported Alternative #1.

Ms. Louise Weiss, Alexander Avenue, stated she preferred the retrofit alternative. This bridge is an old, historic “war horse”. The columns could be reinforced. She remembers when the load limit was 10 tons and felt that a 36-ton load limit was not needed. They do not need a bridge that would accommodate a ladder fire truck or that was ADA accessible. The bridge is not leaking.

Mr. Richard Cunningham, West Baltimore, member of the Heritage Preservation Board, gave a brief history of the bridge. He stated the General Plan calls for the preservation and rehabilitation of the City’s historic resources and he noted the Council has an ethical responsibility to do that. The cost estimates point out that the cost of rehabilitation is much smaller than the cost to demolish and rebuild the bridge. The impacts from rehabilitation would also be much smaller. He asked if the City has investigated other sources of funding. He felt with a little imagination successors would be able to find adequate funding for future maintenance. He stated they should do the right and the less expensive thing and rehabilitate the bridge.

Mr. Dennis Gilardi, Hawthorne Avenue, stated the staff and consultants comments have focused on the fact that this is Federal money vs. local money. He noted the Council agreed over a year ago to pay approximately \$4 million to purchase a piece of property in Corte Madera for the relocation of the Corporation Yard. He stated the City should be able to come up with the money for the retrofit. He stated staff has had the bridge tested and it was found to be safe for fire trucks. The County owns the bike path and there are a minimal number of sidewalks in the area around the bridge. He questioned the need for ADA compliance. He agreed with Mr. Terry that the bridge serves as a traffic-calming device while reducing the flow of traffic in the neighborhood. He preferred alternative #1.

Mayor Hillmer asked if the City would receive funding assistance for alternative #1. The City Manager stated “yes” and noted Federal funding was available for both alternatives.

Mr. Dwayne Price, Elm Avenue, stated he has gone over, under, and around that bridge for 30 years. He will miss it when it is gone and added its time has come and gone. It is no longer adequate for the job as being a part of the day-to-day infrastructure. It is a museum piece. This area cries out for a modern, robust, and safe structure that fulfills all the functions that a bridge should fulfill. He stated they should “make it work before they make it pretty”.

Ms. Tasmin Pessa, Alexander Avenue, stated she is the Safe Route to Schools Leader for Hall Middle School and Redwood High School. She has sentimental feelings about the bridge but feels it is scary due to the visibility problems. Some people treat the bridge as a traffic-calming device while others find it to be an attractive nuisance. She has heard numerous accidents involving her neighbor’s retaining wall.

She discussed the ADA accessibility issues and the need to keep this an effective route for everyone. She stated the Council should do something now about these issues since this is a long-term decision.

Ms. Sallyanne Wilson, Walnut Avenue, member of the Heritage Preservation Board, stated she was not speaking for the Board but rather a resident of Larkspur. She stated some of the focus was on the deficiencies of the bridge and she would like to discuss some of the attributes. The bridge has many unique qualities and it was added to the National Register of Historic Places and California Register of Historic Places in 1983. There are only four similar bridges in Northern California. She noted the cost for environmental review has not been made available. She stated she recently met with the California Office of Historic Preservation and they stated there needs to be a compelling reason for removing a structure and any opposition would add time and money to the environmental process. She noted the General Plan cites these historic resources as irreplaceable assets. The Plan commits the City to safeguarding and preserving these resources. There must be a compelling reason to rebuild this bridge.

Councilmember Arlas asked if the four other bridges looked exactly like this bridge. Ms. Wilson stated the other bridges reflect the same architectural style and design. Councilmember Arlas asked if they were on the Historic Register. Ms. Wilson stated she was not sure.

Councilmember Chu asked if the environmental review process was included in the soft costs. Mr. Cermak stated the numbers include preliminary engineering, environmental design, and construction management.

Ms. Mary Phillips, Alexander Avenue, stated she had been “on the fence” regarding this issue but is now in favor of the retrofit alternative. She had questions about the safety aspect if the bridge were to be retrofitted. Her son is in a wheelchair and the main problem is getting over to the bike path due to the speeding cars. A new bridge would add to the traffic and potentially result in higher speeds. Councilmember Hartzell asked Ms. Phillips if she was describing the path towards the ball field. Ms. Phillips stated she has to cross over from Acacia to get to the bike path.

Mr. James Holmes, Madrone Avenue, stated the existing bridge works very well if driving at a safe and reasonable speed. He stated there were really four alternatives: 1) lower cost, retrofit, non-collapse; 2) lower cost, limited aesthetic, replacement; 3) higher cost, retrofit, that would bring it to the level of survivability and not just non-collapse; 4) higher cost, replacement, that would bring it to the level where it would not only be survivable but would be pretty. He stated the low cost alternatives have been addressed but not the higher cost ones. He stated there were five reasons to chose the retrofit alternative: 1) 25 years is not a life span but just an estimate for the amount of the repairs; 2) there is no real fire safety issue; 3) the General Plan requires a retrofit;

4) it would be more cost effective, quicker, and easier; 5) the disadvantages (attractive nuisance, etc.) are not a serious concern to the community. The earthquake concern is legitimate but the State has already answered that by indicating it would pay for a non-collapse retrofit, it would not pay for a complete survival retrofit, and a compelling reason is needed to take it down. The State is basically saying the earthquake risk is acceptable as a matter of policy. He urged the Council to explore all the alternatives.

Ms. Nancy Weninger, Elm Avenue, disagreed with the comments made by Mr. Holmes. The money that would be put in the retrofit would not buy much of anything and it does not address the real problems- safety, durability, and accessibility for pedestrians and cyclists. She is concerned about the issues brought up by Councilmember Chu and noted they could put a lot of money into the bridge and end up replacing it. She stated there is more to the issue than simply aesthetics and they need to also be practical. She stated safety outweighs the aesthetics. The City would be better off by replacing the bridge now.

Mr. Jack Wilson, Walnut Avenue, stated he often walks under the bridge and noted the lowered height of the new bridge would create a tunnel effect. He was pleased to work on the Centennial Committee and their spirit of preservation of small town character. He asked the Council to preserve this bridge.

Ms. Jean Ricci, Elm Avenue, stated the General Plan commits the City to the preservation of historic resources. She asked the Council to stand behind the values of the community.

Mr. Hi Patton, Wilson Way, asked the Council to carefully look at the cost estimates since there could be a 10% to 20% variance. He stated the alternatives were about the same cost and in the same, general magnitude. He asked about the accident record on the bridge and stated there should be better bike access across the bridge. He stated he preferred alternative #1.

Ms. Kathleen Weiss, Alexander Avenue, stated the existing bridge is beautiful but tired looking and needs to be retrofitted. She is concerned about the safety of the bridge since there are a lot of children and bicyclists that use it. She is in favor of alternative #1 since it is less expensive.

Ms. Helen Heitkamp, Elm Avenue, stated she is speaking as a 49-year resident of Palm Hill. She stated the Palm Hill residents paid for the bridge originally via an assessment district. She stated safety would still be a problem with either of the two alternatives. The bridge is not the problem but rather the curves on the east side. There would be no change to the curves in either of the alternatives. She thought that the area should be posted with "slow curve" signs since the speed limit could not be reduced. She agreed that the bridge acts as a calming device since people have to reduce their speed as they hit the curves. The Public Works Director stated advisory signs could be installed but they were difficult to enforce.

Ms. Heitkamp stated there were some unanswered questions including: 1) whether or not a left turn would be allowed at the T junction from Holcomb to the bridge; 2) would there be a sight line to the east at that point?; 3) how would the new bridge improve the pedestrian, bicycle, and handicapped access to Acacia?

Ms. Camilla Fox, Holcomb Avenue, stated she lives in one of the most affected homes in the area. She shares some of the public safety issues that have been addressed and stated the fiscal issues have not been fully assessed. She stated there would be bicyclists and pedestrians going over a new, flatter bridge at higher speeds. She agreed that the existing bridge slows down traffic due to the poor sight lines. She supports alternative #1 and would like to keep the historic nature of the bridge.

Ms. Amelia Ryan, Holcomb Avenue, had questions about the environmental review process. She stated the State Historic Preservation Office has already indicated strong reservations for the replacement alternative. Ms. Loh stated the Office of Historic Preservation would want to consider all public input with the replacement option and it would be a much lengthier process.

Ms. Leila Lanctot, Meadowood Drive, stated she endorsed alternative #1 but was concerned about children's access to the schools. She stated there were ways to tweak the existing pathway system to provide easier access.

Mr. Grayson Marshall, William Avenue, stated he supported alternative #1 for all the reasons already stated. He had questions about how the construction of a replacement bridge would occur and about the impacts to the neighborhood. Mayor Hillmer stated this would be addressed in the environmental review process.

Ms. Gloria Hood, Acacia Avenue, stated the intersection of Alexander and Acacia was very dangerous and there have been many near accidents. She asked if a lower speed limit could be enforced. The Public Works Director stated the speed limit would need to be surveyed and posted. One hundred vehicles are surveyed and the limit is set at the 85th percentile. Ms. Hood asked if there have been any studies on the bridge. Councilmember Lundstrom stated the Public Works Director had indicated at a prior meeting that advisory warning signs for the sharp curves could be posted. She stated the Council had discussed several things that could be done at the April meeting and she asked the Public Works Director to follow up on prior direction of the Council. The City Manager stated when neighborhood traffic issues arise staff would organize the neighborhood to meet and discuss the issues since there could be unintended consequences. Councilmember Lundstrom asked staff to start this process. Mayor Hillmer noted there was consensus on the Council to post some advisory signs lowering the speed limit and warning drivers about unsafe sight lines. Councilmember Chu noted there were some advisory signs already in place.

Ms. Kathryn Arrow, Baltimore Avenue, stated they have heard some compelling arguments for alternatives #1 and #4. The issues surrounding safety are more focused on peoples driving behaviors. She reiterated that the bridge was on the National Register of Historic Places and pointed out that there were 39 historic landmarks in Marin County.

A resident discussed the possibility of having some warning signs, flashing yellow lights, or a camera on the bridge to increase safety. She stated they should create a walk able path under the bridge.

Mayor Hillmer closed the meeting to public comments.

Mayor Hillmer stated the decision before the Council was to chose a preferred alternative for the purposes of environmental review.

Councilmember Arlas stated the bridge was 82 years old and it has survived past earthquakes. He stated they started this discussion 13 years ago and he wondered why they were rushing into a decision Mayor Hillmer stated they need to make a decision now in order to secure the CalTrans funding. Councilmember Arlas stated it comes down to funding and he agreed with Mr. Patton that it is basically a wash. He finds it difficult to commit the community's resources to buying 25 years as opposed to 75 years. The bottom of the bridge would no longer be historical and would look like 2012 cement. He stated this is simply a bridge and its purpose is to get from "point A to point B". He supported alternative #4 and noted it would result in a more in-depth examination of both alternatives.

Councilmember Hartzell stated she supported alternative #1 as the preferred alternatives for the five reasons stated by Mr. Holmes. She noted there were not a lot of alternatives that would achieve the accessibility issues. On her side of the bridge is a very uneven path and on Acacia there has been an inconsistent application of the requirements of the City to put in sidewalks

Councilmember Chu stated there was no singular answer to anything that they do. They have heard a lot of citations from the General Plan but only from the Historic Preservation Chapter. They have a responsibility to historic preservation but also a responsibility to look forward and that includes changing they way people travel. The community would change and evolve and they could not just look at the "snapshot" of the way things are now. He was concerned about the liability of ignoring a recognized hazard. He stated the financial analysis did not accurately reflect the financial impacts of the alternatives. The \$600,000 maintenance figure would be \$2.1 million in future dollars since they do not have the money today to invest and draw the 4% interest. He stated they should get the "best bang for the buck" for the entire community. If a 6.7 magnitude quake occurs and destroys this bridge and makes it un-repairable then they have burned all the money they put into this bridge and would need to come up with about \$5 million for a new bridge. They need to make sure there is sustainability fiscally and functionally in the community.

Alternative #1b would have been a great compromise because it would have kept most of the structure and allowed them to solve a lot of the safety issues. He supports alternative #4 as the preferred alternative.

Councilmember Lundstrom stated this is a unique structure since it is historic but also a roadway near a park and a school. There are more things that could be done to make it safer including signage, etc. The responsibility is to keep the process moving. She noted the incremental costs for changing the retrofit from non-collapse to repairable would be about \$300,00 which CalTrans might not fund. She would like that this be considered. She supported alternative #1 with a change in the standard to "repairable".

Mayor Hillmer stated this is a complex set of conditions and he must look to the City's policy document which is the General Plan. This document is consistent throughout the various elements and one of the controversial discussions in the development of the General Plan was whether or not traffic mobility would have a higher priority than quality of life issues. The first paragraph in the Circulation Element cautions that quality of life issues should have a higher priority than mobility issues. The Land Use Element says in the first paragraph that the goal is to preserve, enhance, and strengthen the unique physical characteristics and the natural setting of the community. The General Plan makes the environment the highest priority. One of the programs of the General Plan is to have a Heritage Ordinance and to identify and protect the various unique historical resources. This bridge is named on the National Register of Historic Places. When given a choice they should protect and preserve these resources. He agrees with Mr. Patton that when looking at the different alternatives they are a wash. He would like to move forward and be able to find the most cost effective way to implement their decision. He supports alternative #1 as the preferred alternative and would like to move forward with the environmental review.

M/s, Hartzell/Lundstrom and approved 3-2 (Arlas and Chu voted no) to approve alternative #1, with the change to retrofit the bridge to the engineering standard of repairable, for examination in the next steps leading to the environmental review for the Alexander Bridge and to direct staff to immediately look at safety improvements for the area and streets around the bridge. In addition, the Council would like a review of the additional efforts needed to determine whether a higher level of structural stability against earthquakes could be achieved.

ADJOURN MEETING

The Mayor adjourned the meeting at 10:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Toni DeFrancis,
Recording Secretary