

MidCoast Community Council

An elected Municipal Advisory Council to the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors
Serving Over 11,000 Coastal Residents
Post Office Box 64, Moss Beach, CA 94038-0064

November 6, 2005

FAX/Email

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RE: Proposal on resurfacing of MidCoast Streets.

Dear Neil;

Thank you for your response to our initial questions regarding the resurfacing proposals. I apologize for the delay in getting back to you sooner, however many residents and developers are extremely concerned on this issue, and I wanted to be sure to reflect comments from all concerned. Review of that information has, of course, prompted further questions and comments which I hope you will be able to address either in advance of or at our regular meeting of November 9, 2005. These comments came from members of the Council and the public "all" that had reviewed the materials available.

1. An initial concern is the planning aspect of this process and these proposals. The consideration of adding more paved streets without addressing the equally important issue of proper drainage would seem to be almost counter-productive in the long-run, as paving streets without addressing drainage, is a waist of County funds, as the streets can not withstand the amount of diverted water and will be a continuous expense if not dealt with **now**. We believe this is an important consideration for a number of reasons:
 - Mitigation fees are being paid by our local builders for the maintenance of the street system – are all the fees collected locally spent locally, or are they distributed County-wide to all the unincorporated areas? Are there priority areas where these fees are being utilized? As some residents and vacant lots take the brunt of all development, while others feel no effects.
 - Not addressing drainage and storm water control results in higher maintenance costs for the streets that are surfaced – the sections of Cedar and Harte in Montara, Etheldore/Cypress in Moss Beach, Santa Maria/The Alameda in El Granada, 2nd street in Montara and other areas in the MidCoast that have frequent flooding have much higher damage to the streets and adjacent properties.

- Plans for resurfacing or new surfacing projects does not take into consideration potential impacts and damage to “downstream” areas from increased and faster runoff – specifically the proposed surfacing of Alta Vista and Jordan/Irving in Montara. (that should not even be considered without drainage mitigation included).
 - This approach is also creating a long term impact on the vacant lots that are left, creating a burden for local builders and property owners who are left to pick up the additional expense of all up-hill development.
2. As another point of clarification for all our members, residents, property owners and developers, as we understand it Public Works is looking for a way to allow resurfacing of streets within the County-maintained system that are not up to full standard, a practice not allowed under the current standards. These streets are currently maintained to their current level of development with minimal patching, filling, and whatever else is needed. The proposals are a way to allow entire resurfacing of these streets, even though this may result in finished surface roadways that do not meet the specified road standards.

Is this understanding of the proposal correct as stated above?

3. We would like some clarification regarding what is really involved in changing the language within the **Community Plan**. Can it be changed administratively after local MCC hearings, or will it require much more extensive review?

In our consideration of the three possible options presented in your letter of ways to do that, we wondered if changing the actual wording in the road standards might require more than a minimum of local hearings before the MCC; that the argument could be made that, as the Community Plan is incorporated by reference into the LCP, it should require review by the Planning Commission, Board of Supervisors, and Coastal Commission. This has always been our basic understanding of the status of the Community Plan. Please clarify.

4. We are curious as to the origin for this proposal. You mention in your letter the convenience of resurfacing all parallel streets so no one is burdened with extra traffic, which makes good sense in a Public Works kind of way. Was this initiated from within DPW? Were there requests from local property owners, and if so, which ones? And has there been analysis of the costs and benefits of these policies in regards to overall community benefit versus increased benefits for a limited number of property owners? Would this proposal increase the value and development potential of marginal undeveloped properties by placing them on an “improved” street, a value that is currently earned from the expense of having the streets raised to the required standard? These issues relate to those regarding criteria in #5 below.

These reflections underscored the need for a process as in Option 1, with public hearings as necessary, to determine the community benefits and subsequent impacts.

5. The question arose on reconstruction vs resurfacing. We understand that resurfacing is certainly less expensive, and if that turns out to be an equitably beneficial approach, it would make sense. The Council would like to get a better idea on the benefits of reconstruction and when this would be a better approach – there is the concern that this could result in a number of roads with nice surfaces, that would seem fine to drive on, but present traffic and pedestrian hazards including access for emergency vehicles from substandard widths, exacerbate parking, worsen drainage problems and result in more expensive (and not obvious) roadbed failures in the not-so-distant future.

We need to understand what is the current situation with streets that meet the requirements to be in the county maintained system and why are they being denied by the county - we have several residents that have requested this, and are told they are not going to be accepted.

6. How is the priority list of roads to be resurfaced created? What is the process of finalizing the priority list? What are the criteria for prioritizing? Who and what is the process for defining the criteria? What is the minimum road condition in which resurfacing is considered an option?

A lot of the problems could be dealt with by simply defining resurfacing as "maintenance," not as an "improvement." We see nothing in the material that was forwarded that restricts maintenance! However, resurfacing substandard streets (an insignificant range of road and drainage condition) without a case-by-case consideration of the neighborhood drainage will exacerbate and expand our current serious problem. "Lowering" the standards to include resurfacing, which effectively redefines resurfacing as maintenance, might relieve and discourage the County from having to address this issue, something we do not want if the County is ultimately going to be part of the solution.

If the standards were to include resurfacing, how would the community or MCC partake in the process of criteria definition and development of the priority list of roads to be resurfaced?

What is the cost efficiency in expanding the language in the Community Plan to include resurfacing to the road standards definition when drainage has been a documented problem since the Mid 70's? If there are legitimate concerns about the effect of this work, what are the impacts on the more serious systemic and cumulative drainage problems and road failures due to the neglect of dealing with drainage issues?

The lack of response in the Cypress Ave. situation should not be taken as a reason to not address the problem, when the general perception of the problem is that the flooding was created by the lack of planning of drainage effects to down stream residents. The mitigation fees should be used to correct the problem rather than as a burden to existing residents due to a lack of county planning.

7. In your response to our question about the inclusion of drainage, you stated:

"I reviewed the circa 1977 plan and did not find a specific reference to drainage. However the 1994 amendment speaks to drainage as a part of the road standards. My recollection was that the 1994 revision was after we had completed projects which included drainage. However, the completion of these plans also led to the community surveys and the revisions to the Community Plan."

Drainage as defined in the Midcoast Road Standards (sections 1.b, 2.b, and 3.b) consists of " ... standard gray concrete (curbs and) gutters to channel runoff ..."

In addition, Section 5 of the standards, regarding exceptions, goes as far as saying: "... in no case shall exceptions result in paved roads with less than ... drainage facilities to control surface storm water."

This clearly opens it up for creative planning and work beyond concrete gutters accelerating ground water run-off speed, rate and flow.

8. In your response to the question about parking bays, you responded in part that

" ... That section goes on to say" (g) permit unpaved shoulders (or paved shoulders with an encroachments permit) "which allows for parking areas in front of properties."*

The section quoted is supplemented by Section 1.c, which says that:

"Paved parking shoulders and driveway extensions may be allowed ... upon issuance of an encroachment permit by the Department of Public Works. In such cases, an acceptable parking surface material shall be determined ... based on slope, drainage, and engineering conditions."

The problem is the addition of areas of pavement far in excess of what would normally be expected from a single-family residence, especially when the area in front of two or three houses becomes a continuous sheet of asphalt in the ROW and within the front setback area of the parcels. The loss of water absorption and the contribution to runoff speed, volume and rate is significant, and can only get worse if these types of "parking areas" continue to be allowed. If homes are being build on the MidCoast Larger than the amount of parking needed, there is clearly a problem that must be immediately addressed. Part of the issue here may be that the definition of drainage as a determining factor is not neighborhood drainage, but just the basic engineering of running rainwater of any new pavement within the encroachment area. We would like to think the policy is open to interpretation. We request the DPW work with the MCC to set a series of policies and conditions for these types of developments, including considerations of neighborhood drainage impacts. To our mind, this does not need to part of any Road Standard revision.

9. Our original question on Storm Water Management enforcement may have been poorly worded, as it was meant to address not only new construction sites but the effects of that construction on the ROW areas in front of the parcels, as well as road development and maintenance procedures.

To a significant degree, this relates to the proposals for resurfacing, as in most instances we see where this procedure is resulting in worsening conditions of runoff speed, volume and rate during heavy rains, exceeding carrying capacities of existing storm drain culverts and increased erosion and siltation into our creeks (filling creeks with debris, the only form of storm water management we currently have) which is being ignored.

How are the requirements for Stormwater Management under the County NPDES permit going to be, or are they handled in regards to existing drainage conditions and those that might occur under the resurfacing proposals. And, who is supervising the NPDES permit at this time?

We appreciate your referral to Planning in regards to building sites. Please let us know who that was referred to and if there is any response.

Currently, the county standard for new development only addresses the amount of additional speed, rate and flow of run-off from new construction as to the capacity of the gutter/culvert/ditch in front of the property being developed with absolutely NO consideration for the additional impacts to down stream/creek/drainage and slope of existing property and the effects not only to existing residents, but vacant lots which are primarily owned by developers. Please let us know what will be done to address this situation immediately, as the cost of litigation would be costly not only to the county but to the tax payers.

Again, thank you for your help. We look forward to receiving more information on this proposal and seeing you at our next meeting on November 9.

Sincerely

Karen Wilson
Chair, MidCoast Community Council

Cc: Supervisor Rich Gordon
Marcia Raines
Lisa Grote
Concerned Residents & Developers
MidCoast Community Council Members (current and elected)
Steve Smith
Stephen Lowens

----- Original Message -----

Subject: Re: Expansion of MC Road Standards Date: Fri, 28 Oct 2005 17:27:14 -0700 From: Neil Cullen <<mailto:ncullen@co.sanmateo.ca.us>><ncullen@co.sanmateo.ca.us> To: Karen Wilson <<mailto:montara100@comcast.net>><montara100@comcast.net>

The following is in response to your questions. I have responded in a Question(Q) and Response @) format:

Q 1. Can you email a copy of the 1994 Community Plan to the list or send a link to access it! The last one I have is from the 70's. Also, has there been or are there additional policies or other information that we need to proceed with our comments?

R1. I believe all the changes relating to MidCoast Road Standards were attached to my previous letter as the focus was in 1994 was the circulation element in the Community Plan. However, I will send you an additional copy of the attachments. I believe other proposed policy changes with regards to road projects have been contained in my previous memos and are focused on eliminating assessment districts as a result of the passage of Proposition 218, or finding ways to finance drainage improvements using mitigation fees.

Q2. Is there a reason none of the changes deal with Drainage?

R2. I reviewed the circa 1977 plan and did not find a specific reference to drainage. However the 1994 amendment speaks to drainage as a part of the road standards. My recollection was that the 1994 revision was after we had completed projects which included drainage. However, the completion of these plans also led to the community surveys and the revisions to the Community Plan.

Q3. What Three improvement projects were completed mentioned in your letter?

R3. They are the 11th through 14th Streets in 1997, Navarra/Escalona in 2003, and Seventh and East in 1997.

Q4. How long has the Cypress project been waiting for improvements, or how did this come forward to the county as an option? I know the residents at Cedar-Date and Harte have a documented history approximately 16 years old.

R4. I will send you a copy of my February 2005 letter to you, in which I explain that we were proposing Cypress Avenue as a "test case" to

determine if owners of properties that were developed prior to the requirement to pay Mitigation Fees, are willing to pay an equivalent to the mitigation fees to finance a portion of the cost to install drainage improvements that would be constructed together with minimum road improvements as defined in the MidCoast Community Plan.

Q5. On Page 2 of the Circulation Item 1.c. Parking Bays are Prohibited, however, they are currently being granted at quit a rate here. Examples: 500 block of 6th and 100 Block of Cedar just in the past couple of months. The entire frontage of 2 or more homes in a row are paved in Asphalt creating small parking lots. Unfortunately this is probably occurring because the houses built are so large with small yards, the amount of bedrooms exceed the parking capacity of infill development

R5. I believe that the prohibition of parking bays was intended to prohibit parking bay construction in conjunction with our road projects- similar to what was constructed with some of the El Granada Projects. That section goes on to say " (a) permit unpaved shoulders(or paved shoulders with an encroachments permit)* " which allows for parking areas in front of properties.

Q6. What is being done now to enforce Storm Water Management on Building site right now? It is past October 15, and many site are still not silt fenced.

R6. I have referred your question to the Planning and Building Division of the Environmental Services Agency.

Q7. Our next meeting will be November 9, and I would like for you to attend.

R7. I have that on my calendar. What time and where will the meeting be held?

NRC

>>> "Karen Wilson"

<<mailto:montara100@comcast.net>><montara100@comcast.net> 10/27/05 3:46 PM

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The MCC reviewed the Proposed Expansion of the MidCoast Road Standards last night. Many questions remain, to get comments returned to you promptly. If you could address some of the following comments and questions, I will try to have a response to you early next week.

1. Can you email a copy of the 1994 Community Plan to the list or send a link to access it! The last one I have is from the 70's. Also, has there been or are there additional policies or other information that we need to proceed with our comments?
2. Is there a reason none of the changes deal with Drainage?
3. What Three improvement projects were completed mentioned in your letter?
4. How long has the Cypress project been waiting for improvements, or how did this come forward to the county as an option? I know the residents at Cedar-Date and Harte have a documented history approximately 16 years old.
5. On Page 2 of the Circulation Item 1.c. Parking Bays are Prohibited, however, they are currently being granted at quit a rate here. Examples: 500 block of 6th and 100 Block of Cedar just in the past couple of months. The entire frontage of 2 or more homes in a row are paved in Asphalt creating small parking lots. Unfortunately this is probably occurring because the houses built are so large with small yards, the amount of bedrooms exceed the parking capacity of infill development
6. What is being done now to enforce Storm Water Management on Building site right now? It is past October 15, and many site are still not silt fenced.

Our next meeting will be November 9, and I would like for you to attend. I am hoping to have comments to you by Monday. Please reply to the email the list. Thank you!

Karen Wilson
Chair, MidCoast Community Council