

# Midcoast Community Council

P.O. Box 64

Moss Beach, CA 94038

An elected Municipal Advisory Council of the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors  
Serving 12,000 Coastal Residents

## Public Works Committee

August 19, 2002

Neil R. Cullen, Director  
San Mateo County Department of Public Works  
555 County Center, 5th Floor  
Redwood City, CA 94063-1665

Dear Director Cullen,

I am sending you the information we discussed during our phone conversation last week. This cover letter includes the points which the Planning and Zoning Committee and members of the Public Works Committees voted to include in our correspondence with you. The Planning and Zoning Committee meeting was held on August 7, 2002.

The other documents included are:

- Minutes from the July 3 meeting of the Public Works Committee.
- A report to the MidCoast Council delivered on February 13, 2002 following discussions between you, Chair Chuck Kozak and myself in your office on February 11, 2002.
- Council questions and comments following review of the 2/13/02 report.
- A copy of the July 8, 2002 Planning and Zoning Committee's letter to Supervisors Church and Gordon, Environmental Services Director Dean Peterson and Planning Administrator Terry Burnes regarding Phase I of the MidCoast Aquifer Study. Points regarding run-off and drainage are highlighted for your convenience.

Other pressing Council projects, including the Local Coastal Plan review and my work on the Devil's Slide Aesthetics Review Committee have made progress on this matter much slower than the Council and our constituents demand. We are now adopting a more aggressive schedule to deal with these issues as the winter again approaches and with it, the possibility of flooding in many of the areas of historically poor drainage.

We request that you consider the points made and the questions asked and develop responses and comments which can be organized in such a way that short term as well as long term courses of action can be initiated in a timely manner. After you have reviewed these documents, I would like to set up a meeting with you for an initial discussion and to plan a presentation before the full MidCoast Community Council.

At the August 8, 2002 meeting of the Planning and Zoning Committee, three Montara property owners, one property owner from Moss Beach and one from El Granada were present. The discussion focused mainly upon the Cedar/Date/Harte section of eastern Montara, which has a yearly problem with flooding. Concerns were expressed that while this has been a seasonal flood area for over 20 years, there has been no assessment district formed and County efforts to alleviate the problems have been largely unsuccessful. In the absence of consent from a majority of property owners to form an assessment district, what measures can the County take to perform emergency repairs in this area?

Several anecdotal comments were made about the current lack of drainage in the area. The culvert under Franklin St. is currently at capacity. The culvert near the Goose and Turrets Bed and Breakfast is clogged with weeds. Montara resident Larry Ross suggested a neighborhood culvert clearing effort but there were concerns that increased velocity as the water travels towards the creek will only increase the flood zone. The culverts are George and Cedar Streets are bigger than those at Cedar and Harte, causing inconsistency in the ability to move water. Why is this the case and how can it be corrected? These same culverts at Cedar and Harte still have only loose gravel surrounding them and need to be sealed before the winter rains. It was suggested that a new culvert be laid which would extend farther south across Harte Street, carrying the water to a lower elevation before it enters the creek.

Concerning the upstream origins of much of the water in the area, increased flow off Alta Vista needs to be somehow controlled. Improvements in that area appear to be underway, but the Planning and Zoning Committee was not notified or consulted regarding this project. Is this a County project or is Cal American Water doing the work? To further redirect some of this flow, two suggestions were made: 1) a gate valve to the north of the flood-prone area to moderate drainage from the Alta Vista area and 2) a divided roadway on Date St. which would contain a central retention pond and an additional retention pond in the Caltrans Bypass Right of Way area.

Of particular concern during this discussion was the fact that currently the MidCoast has an inadequate supply of drinking water. Methods to redirect excess flows for aquifer recharge are enthusiastically sought. Suggestions were made for percolation fields under driveways and onsite drainage pits. While the County does require some of these drainage systems, a more comprehensive plan to mitigate flooding during new home construction is critical. In addition, flood control can be combined with environmental restoration projects, providing a wider benefit for the entire region. The recent wastewater treatment plant at Calera Creek was mentioned as a model for this type of planning and implementation. City of Pacifica Public Works Director Scott Holmes, a Coastsider resident, is eager to make a tour of the plant available to you. He can provide detailed information on this successful project and suggest ways in which aspects of the plan can be adapted to the MidCoast.

There were several questions about a Stormwater Control District, if such an entity exists and what its responsibilities are in dealing with these issues. There were questions about NPEDS and how developments all over the Midcoast, in Miramar specifically, are factored into this system. There was a question about the mechanism for treating runoff in the east Miramar area before it drains into the Mirada Surf area wetlands.

Underlying all of these proposals is the recognition that funding is necessary to implement any solutions. Is there any FEMA funding available? If so how much and how can it be obtained? What are other potential funding sources besides assessment districts? Is it possible for the County to partner with local sanitary districts to form watershed-wide flood control districts? Can the County institute a Countywide flood control district?

Finally, the current Road Standards were discussed. Which amendments will be necessary to get short term immediate relief in the most vulnerable areas? Should the standards be changed to mandate more permeable roadway surfaces and permeable, yet stable lining for drainage ditches and gutters? By what process can the MidCoast Council reevaluate the current prioritization system for projects and move up those which have more immediate health and safety concerns? Is there data available that records rainfall amounts relative to the amount of flooding which occurs each year? Will a soils engineer/drainage specialist be made available to work with property owners to identify specific problems as the work moves forward?

In recent discussions with member of the Princeton Citizens Advisory Council, concerns were expressed with the current overgrown conditions on parts of Denniston Creek, creating a flood hazard this winter. While Princeton residents who took part in the MidCoast Street Standards Survey in 1995 expressed a desire for no improvements at that time, there are many property owners in the area who now favor street and drainage improvements. By what process can they be polled again to determine the current desires of the community and prioritization of projects for construction?

Again we wish to emphasize the need to move forward with the planning and implementation of drainage improvements for the entire area with emphasis on those areas in need of immediate attention. After you have reviewed this information please contact me so that we can set up a meeting as soon as possible.

Thank you for your willingness to work with the MidCoast Community Council and local property owners to develop a plan which will be of benefit in both the short and the long term.

Sincerely,



April Vargas

Chair, Public Works Committee  
MidCoast Community Council

cc: Supervisor Rich Gordon

Marcia Raines, Director, Environmental Services Agency

Terry Burnes, Planning Administrator, Planning and Building Division

George Walsh, P.O. Box 38, Montara CA 94037

Larry Ross, P.O. Box 371045, Montara CA 94037

Jeff Klagenberg, 874 Buena Vista, Moss Beach CA 94038

Rab Hagy, P.O. Box 370322, Montara CA 94037

Jeff Fanning, 168 Castillejo Dr., Daly City CA 94015

Julian McCurrach, Chair PCAC, P.O. Box 1522, El Granada CA 94018

## MidCoast Drainage, Road and Maintenance Issues

February 13, 2002

This document has been prepared by Public Works Committee Chair, April Vargas, to initiate discussions on these topics

Drainage and road maintenance are issues within the MidCoast which require constant and systematic attention. With recent changes in the laws regulating the creation of assessment districts and other public sources of funding, a comprehensive plan for identifying, prioritizing and financing necessary projects must be developed. Any plan developed cooperatively by the MidCoast Council and the County must conform with the Community Plan, contain the most effective and equitable solutions to the challenges at hand, be a product of an open public process and have the ability to be legally and technically implemented.

The scope of this project seems to involve:

1. The identification and prioritization of necessary improvements and repairs
2. An investigation of the legal mechanism by which these projects can be initiated, taking into account existing provisions within the Community Plan which may require revision
3. An examination of the available funding sources and funding mechanisms for these improvements and repairs

1. At this point, projects have been initiated on a first come, first served basis. Is it advisable to change this system, allowing projects which will alleviate the most detrimental effects with in the community to be constructed first? What are the criteria for determining which projects should have priority? How can project scope be determined? Should streets listed in the Community Plan as secondary arterials receive priority consideration?

Public Works Director Neil Cullen has supplied a current list of proposed projects with specific comments. (see Dir. Cullen's letter of January 3, 2002). This list will be reviewed and updated as the process moves forward.

2. After a road standard survey was conducted in the mid-1990's, an amendment detailing road standards for all MidCoast communities was included in the LCP. Some of these standards may require revision to accommodate the specific solutions necessary to address flooding and drainage problems? By what mechanism can these revisions be made without undermining the integrity of the standards as adopted by the community, the Board of Supervisors and the Coast Commission?

3. With the passage of Prop 218, the mechanism by which an assessment district is formed has become more complex. Is this the best process for funding projects? Should a larger Drainage Maintenance District be formed, with fees assessed to all property owners within that District? Should each community (Montara, Moss Beach, El Granada, Princeton, Miramar) have its district administered separately? How will fees be levied, collected and allocated for

projects? Can a Maintenance District fee be charged each time a property changes ownership to finance the Maintenance District? Are there areas like Clipper Ridge that would be exempted from a Drainage Maintenance District due the presence of infrastructural improvements made during initial development and paid for on an ongoing basis by residents as part of their homeowner association fees?

With changes in recent funding laws, the El Granada Standard, which allows for the option of sidewalks in addition to improved shoulders, may have to be modified in terms of the financial responsibilities of the homeowners in these projects. What do El Granada residents want and what are they willing to pay for?

Chuck Kozak and I had a two-hour meeting with Director Cullen on February 11. We left with many questions and much research to do. In the near term, Director Cullen advised that the issues to be resolved are:

- \* the retention or deletion of the Assessment District, as modified by Prop. 218, as a financing tool
- \* the modification of funding responsibilities for those projects built to the El Granada Standard

In order to make informed decisions on these issues, more background material will need to be supplied to the Council and the community. The Public Works Committee will take on the responsibility of making these materials available, making recommendations, organizing public hearings on these issues and maintaining close contact with the Department of Public Works and Director Cullen.

A copy of this document, complete with Council comments, revisions and additions will be forwarded to him following tonight's meeting.

While a comprehensive review of this entire topic is essential, the Committee will also work to identify more immediate remedies for flooding and drainage issues that are immediate and ongoing. The cumulative impacts of individual development has been a continuing concern in all of our conversations with the County and will continue to be.

Notes from initial MCC discussion of Midcoast drainage issues compiled at the February 13, 2002 MidCoast Community Council meeting:

Regarding setting priorities for drainage improvements, criteria include:

- safety concerns
- protection of sensitive habitat and watershed
- improvement of areas where current/ potential problems affect an entire neighborhood

There was a suggestion that projects be divided between major and minor categories. The major projects would retain priority assignment status. Minor projects would proceed on a first-come, first-served basis.

In order to address the cumulative impacts of projects which negatively affect drainage, new construction approvals should be conditioned and permitting regulations should be stricter to minimize these problems. Construction activity on one parcel must not increase water runoff on adjacent parcels. When new sewer laterals are installed, paving must be repaired satisfactorily before a certificate of occupancy is issued. Any subsequent paving or drainage problems are the responsibility of the developer for a period of one year following construction.

There were some questions about the Department of Public Works' possible collaboration with local utility districts. Sanitary districts have the power to institute storm water management projects but are reluctant to fund them. Can the County assist with funding?

Regarding non-point source pollution, are grants available to address this issue which could also be used as part of a larger drainage improvement plan? Regarding mitigation fees collected at the time of construction to assist with road/drainage improvements, when are these fees collected and when were they set at the current \$1.25 per square foot rate?

If a Drainage Maintenance District is the appropriate funding source for improvements, how can it be structured?

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## Public Works Committee Minutes for Meeting of July 3, 2002

The meeting was called to order at 6:50 pm. Members present were Chair April Vargas, Karen Wilson, Sandy Emerson, Chuck Kozak, Paul Perkovic and members of the public Larry Ross, and Ami Varsanyi.

There was no Public Comment.

Item 7a. Discussion of funding options for local drainage/street improvements. Larry Ross began with the statement that he has found no dependable methods for financing improvements. He wondered if there was a way to have all property owners pay into a fund at approximately \$5000 per project to fund the improvements. More revenue is necessary. Could the \$1.25 per square foot mitigation fee for Public Works be increased to \$2.50 per square foot? Sandy asked if the mitigation fees are somehow tied to the cost of housing and if they are increased as housing prices increase. Chuck commented that while mitigation fees are a one-time charge, fees for a flood control and watershed maintenance district would be annual.

Sandy asked several questions:

How much does the average street improvement project cost each homeowner per square foot?

Where are these costs published or are they calculated on a project by project basis?

Can homeowners form their own assessment district and hire private contractors to do the work? Is this less expensive? What is the process for setting up the assessment district?

Chuck commented that within ten years, all jurisdictions will be required to have treatment systems for storm water. Sewer districts can build and repair storm water systems. Can there be a cooperative effort between the County and the local sanitary districts?

Karen and Larry commented on the current surface material on improved and unimproved streets. How much runoff pollution is caused by oiling unimproved streets? How much runoff pollution is caused by asphalt paving? Do impervious paving materials increase flooding problems?

Chuck mentioned created an urban watershed designation to treat water issues on a locally. Chuck ended by asking how close an analysis County Counsel had done on the Salinas decision, a court case which will influence the formation of assessment districts.

Item 7b. Chuck suggested that the Pilarcitos Creek Advisory Committee be consulted regarding the proposed repair work on Hwy 92. He will do a site visit and report back. The item was continued.

Item 7c. Chuck moved that the Committee support Caltrans' application for a CDP to repair storm slide damage at Grey Whale Cove. State Parks told him that they enthusiastically support the repair proposal. April seconded and the Committee approved the motion unanimously. April will write an approval letter to County Planner Mike Schaller.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:30pm.

Respectfully submitted by Committee Chair April Vargas