

MidCoast Community Council Public Works Committee
Draft Minutes for the Meeting of November 6, 2002

Chair April Vargas called the meeting to order at 7:35 pm. Members present were Chuck Kozak, Karen Wilson, Paul Perkovic, Kathryn Slater-Carter, Sandy Emerson and Ric Lohman. This was a joint meeting of the PW and Planning and Zoning Committees. The PW portion was scheduled from 7:30 until 9:00 pm. Approximately 15 members of the public were in attendance.

Public Comment

Signs advertising water systems which have been put up at construction sites will be removed.

Presentation and Discussion

April introduced Neil Cullen, Director of San Mateo County Public Works, who gave an overview of his department and the roads throughout the unincorporated sections of the County. There are 316 miles of roads within County jurisdiction. In the MidCoast there are four types of roads:

1. Those constructed to the revised road standards adopted in 1994.
2. Those constructed to road standards in force prior to 1994.
3. Roads containing other improvements.
4. All weather or surfaces roads with no improvements constructed.

There are two types of drainage systems:

1. Formal constructed drainage with catch basins which were financed by assessment districts.
2. Informal drainage consisting of ditches which are not maintained by the County beyond their Right of Way and which have no Maintenance District to finance improvements.

Road projects include:

1. The maintenance of roads which contain some improved structural sections according to the Pavement Management System (routes considered to be major arterials or necessary for public and visitor serving access receive priority for maintenance.)
2. Reconstruction of projects to bring roads up to standards for inclusion in the County maintained system. To be included projects must have a valid petition signed by at least 50% of the property owners fronting the proposed project who agree to pay their share of the upgrades, be at least one block long, contain a 16 foot travelway and connect to or be contiguous with a developed road or state highway.

Projects have historically been financed through assessments on property owners' tax bills to be paid over a 10 year period, road funds from the half cent transportation tax, mitigation fees charged per square foot for new construction. These fees are spent in the area where collected, in this case the entire MidCoast. Priority has historically been on a first come first served basis but perhaps this should be revised. It was stressed that in order to receive an opinion from County Counsel on how the prioritization can be changed, the Council must submit some very specific questions and draft proposals.

With changes in state law, the Board of Supervisors can no longer override property owners' protests of a project that had previous support. For this reason, the County is hesitant to incur costs for initial project design. It seems more appropriate that upon qualifying a project through a successful election the property owners put up the money for all initial design costs.

Until a new system for determining priority and upfront funding for projects is developed, the County will continue to maintain existing surface improvements. Presently drainage improvements are tied in with road improvements and cannot be initiated separately. Perhaps this should be changed. Peak run-offs must be reduced to address flooding problems in the Cedar and Harte area of Montara.

Concerning tree removal, the County has a road easement but the underlying fee title to property adjacent to roads belongs to the property owner. The County will trim trees to allow for sight clearance and 14 foot clearance above the road surface. If a tree is dead or dying, a certified arborist's report is necessary for removal. At this point there is no replacement policy. The County would replace trees if property owners agreed to be responsible for all future maintenance and a maintenance district were established for this purpose (assessing owners for these services.)

Concerning speed control devices, the County lost a law suit involving a bicyclist who suffered severe brain damage as a result of an accident involving speed bumps. The County is using speed dips and modified bumps on two projects in the County and assessing their success. The County will then develop a process for requesting and installing approved speed control devices. The CHP is currently reviewing the draft process. The prima facia speed limit in residential areas is 25 mph.

The MCC can represent the community in recommending that the Board of Supervisors direct the use of local mitigation fees to particular projects. Property owners can match these fees to ensure that projects are constructed. How these fees are assessed and collected will need to be worked out.

Questions and Answers

Neil Cullen's responses are printed in bold type.

Jack Myers asked why the road improvement designs are not consistent throughout the MidCoast. He also asked for a light at the entrance to the airport. **Neil explained the changes to the road standards in 1994 and pledged to look into improving the lighting at the airport entrance.**

Leonard Woren commented that major thoroughfares in the community should not be dependent on adjacent property owners being assessed for improvements. He cited Sonora and Alameda as examples of heavily traveled roads that are in very poor condition. **Neil commented that if roads meet the criteria they can be brought into the County maintained system and perhaps assessment districts for further improvements could be formed later. The Alameda is all ready a County maintained road. If it requires further improvements, the community must decide how it should be done. Audience members**

were encouraged to submit their concerns and proposals for solutions. A priority list of projects should be developed.

Virginia Walsh asked what is required to remove a tree. Just an arborist's report? Can the removal be conditioned to include the replacement of the tree? Vic Abadie asked if a tree is leaning dangerously but is not diseased will the County remove it? Chuck Kozak responded that an arborist can determine how likely a tree is to fall and will make recommendations on appropriate trimming. Karen Wilson suggested that ragged trees need to be groomed and suggested that for trees that are removed but cannot be replaced due to construction concerns, the trees be banked and replanted in other areas. **Neil responded that a tree replacement policy needs to be investigated and that removals are considered on a case by case basis. The long term cost to the County is maintenance not the short term cost of the replacement tree. The County will give the property own a tree if it is planted on the owners' property. A Tree Maintenance District needs to be formed to contribute to the yearly maintenance of trees.**

Karen Wilson suggested that better road signs in school safety zones should be installed. Concerning the maintenance of water runoff and responding to questions and comments from Larry Ross, George Walsh and Rab Hegy, **Neil stated that overland flow is the most natural course, the line of least resistance. There must be other options besides bigger storm drain systems. He mentioned holding basins approved by the Regional Water Control Board. They can be pumped out after peak flows but even metering water out in a controlled fashion may not avoid impacts downstream. Currently funding is available for road construction projects only. There is no money for independent drainage projects or expert consulting. He is unsure of the difference between a creek, a stream and a drainage ditch. USGS maps list blue line creeks.**

Jeff Laughlin thanked the County for recent pavement improvements in Princeton and asked how such improvements are financed. He also asked about priority projects for Princeton and if mitigation fees collected from new development in Princeton can be used exclusively to fund improvements in Princeton. **Neil answered that the improvements had been funded through gas tax revenues. April suggested that the Princeton Citizens Advisory Committee put together a list of priority projects and present them to the MCC for consideration. All MidCoast projects will compete for mitigation fees generated in the MidCoast.**

Sally Lehrman asked about traffic calming and emphasized its necessity. How can a process be started now and who will pay for it? **Neil answered that surveys have gone out to the property owners in the areas where the speed dips and modified speed bumps have been installed. The CHP is also reviewing these projects. The Board of Supervisors will hear the survey results and rule on this matter sometime after January 2003.**

Kathryn Slater-Carter commented that the difference between a creek and a drainage ditch is the size of the area that is drained. She suggested levying new development fees on houses to address drainage issues on the subject property and downstream. She also stated that there is a lack of coordination on standards for projects. A recent project removed 12 trees and installed a hydrant with no CDP. How can the Public Works department be made aware of the need for CDP's and the least damaging alternatives for improvements and construction? **Neil commented that mitigation fees can be used for drainage projects but there is a finite**

amount of money available and that the fees being generated are insufficient to cover the cost of the improvements needed. He acknowledged that his department will have to work on becoming better informed about specific project issues.

Sandy Emerson voiced her concerns about the lack of striping on the Alhambra project in El Granada. She asked about the cost per square foot of different paving alternatives. **Neil answered that he will pass her concerns along and that the Navarra/Escaloma project cost over one million dollars. Slurry sealing is 1/15 the cost of paving. He will calculate costs on a per square foot basis.**

Paul Perkovic observed that in an attempt to circumvent traffic congestion during morning commute hours, drivers turn east on Capistrano, following the frontage road to Coronado, where they turn southward back onto Hwy 1. He asked what can be done. Can the left turn signal on Capistrano be shortened? **Neil said he would discuss this with the state highway department.**

Chuck Kozak asked how close the interaction between the Planning and Public Works Departments is? Does Pete Bentley or Public Works ever review letters sent to Planning by the MidCoast Council and the Planning and Zoning Committee? Does he review designs and approvals? How the Council work with Public Works to address the cumulative impacts of individual developments? **Neil replied that the quality of the plans submitted is often a factor. DPW often assumes the best, rather than the worst. He conceded that he didn't have a good answer at this time but urged that Pete be copied on all Council and Committee correspondence. Better standards must be developed.**

Chuck suggested that review is required of the specific decisions made after a project has been approved. Problems are being caused by required street improvements.

April once again thanked Neil for his participation and indicated that she will send minutes of the meeting and talk with him to follow up on the action items prior to the next Public Works Committee meeting.

There was a brief recess while Planning and Zoning Committee members set up for the rest of their meeting.

Respectfully submitted by April Vargas

Meeting with the MidCoast Community Council Public Works Subcommittee- November 6, 2002

Some issues that we are looking for input or support from the MidCoast Council and its subcommittees

Should road resurfacing on specific streets be done while road priority projects are developed?

Should parameters other than "first come first served" be considered in developing a list of priority projects for the MidCoast?

Should priorities for road reconstruction be determine for the various sub areas of the MidCoast?

Should projects to improve drainage also be given consideration as separate projects?

Should the MidCoast Community Plan be modified to allow more flexibility in developing projects for the sub areas of the MidCoast?

Should Mitigation Fees be used to finance major drainage improvements to the extent of the available funds with contributions from those benefiting required to partially finance drainage improvements?

Other?

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