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## Town awards sinkhole bid, with repairs to start soon

By *Sophie Braccini*

The Moraga Town Council unanimously agreed to award the sinkhole repair contract to McGuire and Hester, with implementation to start immediately. Lower Rheem Boulevard will be closed during the time needed to make the repairs and probably won't reopen until October.

Public Works Director Edric Kwan expressed great relief that Moraga's bid documents had finally been approved by the Federal Highway Administration after more than a year of a burdensome and lengthy process. As the sinkhole was not declared an emergency repair by FEMA the town had to follow the regular municipal rules that requires the public works department to go through an open bidding process. The contract has to be awarded to the lowest bidder, as long as it is responsive and responsible.

The town received four bids for the repair work with prices ranging from \$1.3 to \$2 million. The town engineer had estimated the work at \$1.7 million. McGuire and Hester was the lowest bidder. Kwan presented the company at the June 14 meeting as a very well-known contractor that has worked with the town before.

The total cost for fixing the hole includes additional expenses on top of the \$1.3 million: the emergency opening intervention (\$600,000), project and construction management costs, design, and 15 percent added for contingency. The total equals \$2,969,000, thus \$331,000 less than was anticipated. If all goes according to plan, the town should get back about \$2.65 million, hopefully at some point in the not-too-distant future.

Kwan presented the extent of the work that will be done by the contractor: first excavate and remove the corrugated culvert that failed over a year ago. The metal pipe will be replaced with a reinforced concrete pipe. Once the culvert is replaced and attached to the rest of the creek channel, the contractor will repair the pavement and the sidewalk, including an inlet for collection of rain water in the new pipeline.

Michael Anderson, operations manager with McGuire and Hester, came to the meeting to answer questions, but none were asked of the contractor by the council before approving staff recommendation to award the contract.

Contacted a few days later, Anderson confirmed that the company would start work mid-July for an estimated time of 77 days. He was sure to add though that this number of days was an estimate and that there could always be surprises once the hole is completely opened. In order to complete the work before the rainy season, deemed to arrive on Oct. 15, the McGuire and Hester crews will work extended hours and on Saturdays.

During the time of the construction, Rheem Boulevard will be completely closed at the sinkhole. Anderson said that the roadway will be open to reach the areas that need to be worked on, and that the street will remain closed, whether or not workers are on site.

Kwan explained that the town could not make going through the shopping center an official alternate route. He said that the town would have had to sign an access right agreement with the property owner, something that could have added weeks to the process.

Regular updates will be posted on the town website at [moraga.ca.us](http://moraga.ca.us)

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