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## Town approves additional \$1M to complete Canyon Bridge construction

By *Sophie Braccini*

The Moraga Public Works Department received much higher bids than expected for the preparation of the site and the installation of a temporary bridge that will restore communication with the Canyon community. The increase in cost is partly due to the fact that the contractor was asked to work seven days a week and extra hours, if needed, to meet the deadline. Staff continues to target the end of November for the reopening of Canyon Road.

Public Works Director Edric Kwan opened his presentation at the Oct. 12 special council meeting indicating that the town was facing a new challenge. The total cost to build the emergency temporary bridge replacing the one that became unsafe last April had jumped by about \$1 million. Most of that extra cost comes from the contractor that will prepare the site and install the emergency one-lane bridge that the town will lease. The bid for the bridge lease itself, around \$200,000, came in at the estimated cost, and staff issued the contract for the bridge on Oct. 13.

Myers and Sons, which is doing the bridge preparation and installation, started work Oct. 9, preparing the mobilization and excavating for the future abatements. The schedule allows for 43 days to complete the work, including the installation of the bridge.

Several Canyon residents who depend on that bridge to reach Moraga, and who rely on the bridge for Moraga-Orinda Fire District responders to access the area, came to the Oct. 11 regular council meeting to express their frustrations and fears. The difficult situation they are enduring has fueled rumors, often unfounded, which in turn increases anxiety and feelings of neglect. For example, residents on Oct. 11 asked about the potential of possible winterization of the bridge and postponement of the work to next year. Kwan explained that the basis for that rumor was a statement he made when the vice president of the Canyon School Board asked a judge to stop the demolition of the bridge. If that had happened, Kwan said he would have had to winterize the site because there is no room in the narrow passage to have both the old bridge and the emergency one.

When asked what would happen if rain would stop the construction and installation, Kwan explained that the contractor would have to follow the rules of closing the site on heavy rain days, and that it could delay the process, but that the first priority was to reopen Canyon Road.

The council members unanimously approved spending the extra money. Part of it will come from the town's reserve fund, further reducing it to just \$500,000.

Council member Kymberleigh Korpus asked Kwan if some money could have been saved if the bids had been sent earlier in the summer. Kwan agreed, but explained that the bidding process is a highly regulated procedure that under normal circumstances can take a year for a bridge and includes many levels of environmental reviews. In this emergency case, some procedures were expedited but the Federal Highway Administration that will ultimately reimburse the town still required a bidding process.

When Kwan was asked when he thought the town would get its money back, he said that it would likely take several years. In 2017 alone, and even before the devastating North Bay fires, California was in need of emergency funding totaling over \$10 billion, most of which is unfunded at this time.

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