

# Safety of 40-foot section of exposed pipeline in Briones questioned



Nearby trees on eroding creek bank and slope may pose hazard to span

Photos provided

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Michael Dawson thanked the city council for its prompt response to his email at the Sept. 9 city council meeting as he took advantage of time set aside for Public Comment to reinforce how deeply concerned the task force is about the safety of this 70-year-old pipeline. He pointed out that

the utility has cut over 245 trees in Briones as part of the CPSL, including some just steps away from the pipeline, while ignoring “the real threat.”

Vice Mayor Susan Candell expressed her gratitude for the group’s work in identifying the potential risk. She said that she had just got off the phone with a PG&E engineer

who had been out to the site and visually inspected it. According to Candell, the engineer shared her concern and said that it would be fixed.

Sarkissian also expressed PG&E’s gratitude for the resident’s work. “We appreciate these customers asking questions about this pipeline,” and she said that the pipeline has been and continues to be

monitored as part of ongoing maintenance activities.

“We are revisiting the site and gathering more detailed data to ensure continued safe operation,” says Sarkissian. “If any precautionary steps are identified, we will take action right away.”

Following PG&E’s work earlier this year to cover up exposed pipeline along the Lafayette-Moraga Trail, the CPUC requested a report on all exposed pipelines in Lafayette.

Gina Dawson says, “For reasons PG&E has yet to identify, this span was not included in Lafayette exposed pipeline reporting requested by the CPUC,” adding that PG&E reported 14 other exposed pipeline sections on three of the five transmission pipelines running through Lafayette. “This unreported section is in addition to eight other exposed sections identified within a seven-mile stretch of this same ‘high volume, high pressure’ pipeline route, L-191-1,” she says.

“It’s very interesting that the PG&E engineer confirmed to Susan Candell that repairs would need to be made, just on the basis of one visual check,” says Gina Dawson. “If

this span was monitored by regulatory standard, which we may never know if we do not get the records we requested, it seems PG&E should have identified the threats and mitigated the risks well before residents had to point it out.”

Gina Dawson says that whether or not the omission of the 40-foot span was intentional, it undermines trust in PG&E information and the company’s ability to identify safety threats. “If we cannot trust the integrity of the information PG&E provides us, how can we subsequently trust integrity of PG&E’s safety programs and that of the pipeline itself?”

“Why is PG&E focusing on CPSI tree removals that pose no measurable threat, and meanwhile leave dangerous tree hazards like this?” Michael Dawson asks, referring to the tree that is in danger of falling onto the exposed pipeline.

PG&E management informed the GSTF Sept. 11 that they were currently inspecting the section of pipeline and would be providing them with a more detailed response, likely within a week.

# Las Trampas state-of-the-art facility planned



Rendering of the new building

Image provided

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Despite all of this, the feeling in the place is one of joy. The philosophy is that all people with IDD are entitled to develop their optimum state of social, physical and mental well-being. Participants are integrated into the community, going out to work where possible. They work on campus too, at a shredding business, providing janitorial services, and making blankets for Children’s Hospital Oakland. They go out bowling and to the gym. Integration in the community is a focus.

Capital Campaign Committee Member and former Development Director Kathy Merchant says, “I put myself in the shoes of the families we serve and realize not only does Las Trampas offer them respite from 24/7 caregiving Monday-Friday, but they know their family member is encouraged to explore a rich menu of activities on and off campus.”

When the new \$12.5 million phase-one, two-story construction is complete, anticipated in 18-24 months, Las Trampas will be able to offer a campus, unique in all of Northern California, serving 120 individuals, almost double the current capacity. The facility will be able to take 50 participants in wheelchairs.

“To my knowledge, this facility will be the only one of its kind that specifically addresses the environmental needs of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, particularly those on the autism spectrum,” says Executive Director Daniel Hogue.

Hogue explains that with diagnoses of autism on the rise, the new facility will accommodate special sensory needs of these individuals including acoustics, lighting, transitional spaces, and sensory areas.

Hallways will be wide enough to accommodate two

wheelchair users and one walker, so that no one will be in the position of feeling “in the way” in their own community. There will be multiple garden spaces intentionally designed to calm or stimulate the five senses. There will be a teaching kitchen. Among the many features planned, Hogue is excited for a digital communications system that can accommodate evolving technologies.

“Since approximately 50% of the individuals served by Las Trampas have limited to no verbal communication skills, we are including features that will allow expansion of technology as a tool for learning,” says Hogue. “This includes smart devices, assistive technologies, and augmentative and alternative communication systems.”

The project will require moving everyone off campus. Currently, Hogue says, they are working on finalizing a deal to secure the temporary location space.

Hogue explains that with program closures occurring throughout the state and approximately 15,000 people being added to the California IDD system each year, the pressure is on to build sustainability and capacity to ensure entitlements established through the Lanterman Act – a law stating the rights and responsibilities of persons with developmental disabilities – are secure.

“Fortunately in the Lamorinda area, we have a community that understands the importance of leaving no one behind, including those with intellectual and developmental disabilities, despite state funding challenges,” says Hogue. “With the support of our community, we are able to raise enough funds to start phase-one of our new campus – a campus designed specifically to meet the needs of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, and particularly, those with autism.”

and also incurred approximately \$4 million in financing. “So, the need for additional fundraising is crucial to ensure Las Trampas’ ongoing sustainability by reducing the need for \$4 million worth of debt service.”

Hogue is very grateful to Connie and Michael Collier who have together headed the capital campaign. Michael Collier, a retired architect himself, is also president of the board of directors and has been heavily involved along the way with the project. “Personally, I feel blessed to have been able to ‘find a meaningful place’ at Las Trampas,” he says, “where my professional experience can contribute to the realization of a new, state-of-the-art campus that will serve our fragile, under-served population for the next 50 years.”

Once this phase is complete a second phase will add an approximate 10,000 square

feet of administrative offices and additional classroom space. The public will have plenty of opportunity to see all details of the projects as excitement grows. Architectural renderings will be on display on the fence bordering the Lafayette-Moraga Trail.

Plans will also be available at the 10th Annual Walk n’ Roll fundraiser (see story on page B5) on Sept. 28, and the public is invited to an “Old Facility Farewell” information evening with wine and hors d’oeuvres from 5 to 7 p.m. Oct. 8 for speaker presentations and a tour.

“Lafayette is very lucky to be the host city to such an amazing, caring, and well run program for some of the most vulnerable and ignored among us,” says Collier.

To RSVP for the Old Facility Farewell Event, call (925) 284-1462.

Hogue explains that to fund a \$12.5 million phase-one project, Las Trampas has had to utilize approximately \$4 million from the sale of assets coupled with reserve funds



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