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Town Council authorizes Phase 2 of Laguna Creek Restoration Project

By Vera Kochan



Example of periodic Laguna Creek flooding at the Hacienda Photo courtesy Moraga Public Works Dept.

The ongoing Laguna Creek Restoration Project, located at the Hacienda de las Flores, is entering Phase 2 which involves removing the existing, undersized culvert near the Pavilion and restoring a natural channel for improved flood protection for the Pavilion and other facilities in the area.

In October 2020, the Town council awarded BKF Engineers a contract to complete the Phase 1 design plans (up to 65%). According to the Nov. 8 staff report by Public Works Director/Town Engineer Shawn Knapp, Senior Civil Engineer Bret Swain, and Associate Civil Engineer Edrienne Aguilar, "The 65% Plans display how the proposed design will restore the natural stream channel and expand capacity to accommodate a 100-year flood, including the 30-foot-wide vehicular bridge, decomposed granite trail, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) parking stall relocated to the front of the building."

Additionally, "the 65% plan set includes details for the grading and striping of the relocated ADA parking stall; cross-sections of the proposed new creek channel; structural plans for the proposed bridge; and an erosion control plan."

In August, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) had approved a revised Phase 2 federal share of funds of up to nearly \$1,681,995 for the town to proceed with 100% design, bid support, and construction engineering. The total federal share has now increased to \$1,808,810, and the non-federal share for all phases is \$999,723. The total estimated project cost by FEMA is \$2,808,533.

Phase 2's project scope includes obtaining necessary environmental permits; coordinating with utility agencies for any needed relocation work; completing 100% plans, specifications, and estimates; providing technical support during bidding; and providing technical support during construction.

If this coming winter's El Nino weather predictions are correct, the Hacienda can ill-afford to go through yet another flood damaging episode such as last season. "The drainage culvert interfaces with other assets in the area," according to the staff report. "Failure of the culvert to adequately convey storm runoff waters induces flooding of those other assets, such as the adjacent roadway, trails, hardscapes, and buildings. The flooding can then lead to a cascade of other failures and damage to other assets." As a worst-case scenario, if the Hacienda facilities required shutting down due to flood related damages, the town could risk losing nearly \$25,000 in monthly rental income.

The Town Council voted 4-0, with one recusal (Kerry Hillis), in favor of amending BKF's services agreement to increase their contract by \$60,170 due to their indication that costs have risen due to project delays related to obtaining FEMA Phase 2 approval, in addition to high inflation. The council also authorized Phase 2 (100% design, bid support, and construction engineering support) to proceed.

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