

March 25, 2017

via electronic mail
Presidents Day Flood Event Special Meeting

Honorable John Varela, Chair, and
Board of Directors, Santa Clara Valley Water District

RE: Support for After Action Third Party Review of Coyote Creek Flood Event

Dear Chair Varela and Board Members:

Thank you for holding this special meeting about the Coyote Creek flood event on Presidents Day, and for all the efforts you and District staff are devoting to the on-going situation. I am seeking your support for one of the recommendations in Mayor Sam Liccardo's "San Jose Flood 2017" memo of March 9th (attached):

- (3) If the City Manager deems appropriate, call for an After Action Review to assess and improve coordination at the inter-agency level, especially between the City, Santa Clara Valley Water District, County, and others. The mechanism for the inter-agency review, for example by a private third party expert or public entity, shall be determined by the City Manager. (memo, page 2)

As the memo points out: "As we continue the recovery and relief effort, we must also begin to better understand and evaluate what happened in the days leading up to, during, and following the flooding. This is the only way to identify and fix some of the shortfalls in our preparation and response, and to better protect our residents from floods." Clearly the Water District recognizes similar needs which are being addressed by the Safe Clean Water and Natural Flood Protection Plan projects for Emergency Response Upgrades (C2) and Emergency Response Planning (E2).

Please consider how the District might co-sponsor the proposed After Action Review by a third party - with particular attention to "lessons learned" for the key performance indicator "coordinate with agencies to incorporate District- endorsed flood emergency procedures into their Emergency Operations Center Plans" (E2-KPI #1). By extension, I expect such an After Action Review will also be particularly relevant in the flood-prone San Francisquito Creek watershed where I live for our use in reviewing the draft San Francisquito Emergency Action Plan, which is highlighted in the Year-3 Annual Report (E2) for the Safe Clean Water Plan, compared with our local experiences during recent rain events.

Thank you for your attention to this suggestion. I look forward to seeing the Agenda Package of materials for your special meeting, and plan to watch the discussion.

Sincerely yours, Trish Mulvey
(650) 326-0252 or mulvey@ix.netcom.com

cc: Norma Camacho, Melanie Richardson, and Interested Parties
(Attachment)

COUNCIL SPECIAL SESSION: 03/09/17



Memorandum

TO: CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Mayor Sam Liccardo
Vice Mayor Magdalena Carrasco
Councilmember Raul Peralez
Councilmember Lan Diep
Councilmember Tam Nguyen

SUBJECT: SAN JOSE FLOOD 2017 **DATE:** 03/09/17

APPROVED:

DATE: 03-02-17

Our thoughts and prayers remain with all who have suffered through these floods. More than 400 families still cannot return home, and have been forced to stay with friends and family, or in shelters. The thousands more who have returned home continue to grapple with the devastating impact the flooding had on their homes and lives.

Over the past week and a half, we have focused on doing all that we can to provide these families relief and we want to thank the thousands of City employees from every city department – including police officers, fire fighters, code enforcement officials, building inspectors, PRNS and Housing employees – who have been, and remain, hard at work to safely house as many people as possible. A special thank you to San Jose Fire crews who rescued 350 people stranded during the floods, ensuring no loss of life during the catastrophic event. In addition, 1,900 volunteers have come out to work side-by-side with our employees and affected residents to clean up those neighborhoods that were hardest hit by the flooding, and 2,200 donors have contributed their hard earned dollars to the San Jose Flood Victim Relief Fund to assist those who have lost so much.

As we continue the recovery and relief effort, we must also begin to better understand and evaluate exactly what happened in the days leading up to, during, and following the flooding. This is the only way to identify and fix some of the shortfalls in our preparation and response, and to better protect our residents from floods. Through this memo, we seek to start that critical discussion, so that we may help those currently in need and prepare for future emergencies.

RECOMMENDATION

1. Direct the City Manager to address the following subject areas (see Paragraph 4) — along with others identified by Council and Staff throughout this process. Release all relevant

information through a series of public hearings and public reports in the weeks ahead, as City staff collect that information from relevant departments and outside agencies.

2. Direct the City Manager—in consultation with external experts or agencies – to draft a proposed “Action Plan” that consists of immediate short-, medium-, and long-term measures to fix deficiencies and improve procedures in the City’s flood and emergency preparedness, for Council adoption and immediate implementation. Bring immediately to Council any requests for funding for assistance from external experts or consultants needed to identify problems or solutions. Prioritize for the first public hearing appropriate emergency responses and flood preparations to improve emergency preparedness for the remainder of this storm season.

3. If the City Manager deems appropriate, call for an After Action Review to assess and improve coordination at the inter-agency level, especially between the City, Santa Clara Valley Water District, County, and others. The mechanism for the inter-agency review, for example by a private third party expert or public entity, shall be determined by the City Manager.

4. Invoke Section 416 of the City Charter, where necessary, to obtain relevant information that will enable Council and staff to identify issues and remedy deficiencies in the areas outlined below, or otherwise deemed relevant by the Council:

A. Early Notification to Residents for Emergencies:

- Identify explicit risk thresholds for triggering “low tech” notification efforts—i.e., knocking on doors, utilizing networks of “block captains,” and the like—that must be used in communities with high numbers of non-English speakers, or with limited digital access;
- Review and identify improvements in protocols for the use of non-English media outlets to warn monolingual residents of risks, and for translation of emergency information coming from the City’s Emergency Operations Center;
- Refine the City’s Language Access Plan (LAP) to develop a method for identifying City employees who can assist with door-to-door notification efforts when triggered, what languages they speak, and their LAP assistance levels (spoken, written, etc.) to be denoted through a notation in the Human Resources database such that a notification can match employees with on-the-ground resource needs;
- Identify through census data or neighborhood planning information, primary languages of neighborhoods so agencies can best deploy multi-lingual staff;
- Identify, in conjunction with the County of Santa Clara’s Office of Emergency Services, technological improvements in early warning systems that the County could implement—or, if necessary, that the City should implement – to ensure that residents can receive notifications of looming threats without subscription. Identify obstacles, including funding, that must be overcome to implement those systems, possible partners – such as school districts – that have such systems in place, and a proposed timeline for implementation; and
- In light of anecdotal reports that AlertSCC subscribers in flood-impacted areas did not receive warnings, identify any shortcomings in the operation of AlertSCC and any improvements that can be implemented in the immediate future.

B. Response for Impacted Residents and Neighborhoods:

- Identify “next steps” for the City to help flood impacted residents return to normalcy, including but not limited to:
 - i. Any building improvements or infrastructure repairs such as streets, storm drains, sewer repairs, etc. that require immediate action;
 - ii. Health and safety verification as it pertains to contaminated waters, associated dangers and how best to inform residents of the risks and best practices for mitigating those risks;
 - iii. On-going protocol for coordinating direct community engagement and information sharing, in coordination with Council offices, to ensure residents are informed of support services in multiple languages; and
 - iv. Funding support that can be provided by the City, Water District, FEMA, or other agencies and how best to provide those resources to flood damaged neighborhoods.
- Identify for the future a new protocol for communicating with and engaging residents – including on-the-ground staff and in multiple languages – with information following an emergency.

C. Flood Data & Communication Networks:

- In conjunction with the Santa Clara Valley Water District, determine what information was provided to the City concerning creek channel capacity, storm-related flows, and projected timing of increased creek levels that, in retrospect, should have triggered more aggressive and specific warnings to residents;
- In conjunction with the Water District, determine what information was not correct, and identify how to better “ground-truth” or verify data so that the City can better understand the magnitude and timing of flood risks;
- Identify what operational improvements need implementation to ensure better communication between the Water District and the City Office of Emergency Services; and
- Identify what independent sources can be used to ensure the reliability of technical data provided by outside agencies or City departments in dynamic, fast-changing circumstances like these, and how to operationalize the verification of information in these instances. Also consider additional stream gages in flood prone areas for more accurate real-time data.

D. Organizational Operations:

- In the longer term, identify a third party (or City Auditor) to define the appropriate structure and staffing for the City’s Office of Emergency Services, and whether its mission could be better served by the creation of an independent department or division that would ensure better access to resources, key staff, etc.
- In the longer term, identify improvements and a workplan to update the City’s Emergency Operations Plan outlining how best to respond to various emergencies and address the concerns outlined in this memo.

E. Stream Channel Maintenance:

- Assess what substantial impact vegetation growth, sediment build-up, or obstacles had on channel capacity in the Coyote Creek. In other words, to what extent did flooding beneath the stated maximum channel capacity result from any of those causes:
 - i. If these issues had any impact on flooding, further define the respective roles and responsibilities of the City and Water District with regards to maintenance of stream channel capacity, with specific reference to the Water District's annual Stream Maintenance Program. Determine what impact, if any, Water District projects in the Coyote Creek, such as the July 2016 Sediment Removal project, have had in flood mitigation; and
 - ii. Determine the responsibility of property owners, with or without a Water District easement, to maintain flood control along their properties, then determine:
 1. Funding sources for the City to pay for stream maintenance in San Jose such as funding from the November 2012 passage of the Water District's Safe, Clean Water and Natural Flood Protection Program parcel tax measure; and
 2. What, if any, areas along Coyote Creek require City-funded maintenance, and if necessary, whether a Joint Powers Authority or other joint effort can be created to ensure consistent and thorough stream maintenance to maintain flood mitigation of the channel.

F. Flood Control along Coyote Creek:

- Identify the status, funding needs, and timing of several previously-proposed or identified Water District projects to mitigate flood risk along the Coyote Creek, including, but not limited to:
 - i. A retaining wall to protect the Rock Springs neighborhood;
 - ii. Coyote Creek Flood Protection projects previously approved by the voters in November 2000 in the Water District's Clean, Safe Creeks Program;¹
 - iii. Any projects identified or approved by the voters in the November 2012 passage of the Water District's Safe, Clean Water and Natural Flood Protection Program;²
 - iv. Any other feasible projects that might reasonably have reduced the flood risk to the neighborhoods around and in Rock Springs, Spartan Keyes, Brookwood Terrace, Olinder, Naglee Park, Oakland Avenue, and Charcot Avenue; and
 - v. Identify what, if anything, the City can do to advocate for on-going federal, state, or regional funding for flood control along the Coyote Creek.

¹ <http://www.valleywater.org/services/CoyoteCreek.aspx>

² <http://www.valleywater.org/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=9584>

G. Anderson Dam:

- Identify what, if anything, the City can do to advocate for federal, state, or regional funding for seismic safety and better management of releases at Anderson Dam;
- Identify the role and input, if any, the City has in Water District decisions regarding the release of water at Anderson Dam;
- Identify the decision-making process in recent months as Anderson Dam was filling from repeated storms and at what point releases from the dam were necessary; and
- Identify what, if any, additional protocols might be reviewed to ensure interests of City residents are fully incorporated in release decisions at Anderson Dam.