

Summary Notes

8-23-06 Meeting

Attendees:

Sycamore Triangle Association (STA)
Mill Valley, CA

Marin County Supervisor Charles McGlashan
Aide Maureen Parton

Marin County Dept of Public Works - Farhad Mansourian (Director), Tracy Clay (Senior Civil Engineer, Flood Control & Water Conservation District) and Tim Hampton (Flood Control & Water Conservation District, Flood Zone 3)

Major Topics Covered:

- 1) History of flooding in the Sycamore Triangle neighborhood
- 2) Various factors that contributed to the Dec 30-31, 2005 flood
- 3) Extent of damage from the Dec 30-31, 2005 flood (cars, homes, businesses)
- 4) Several communities and specific neighborhoods in Marin County (e.g., Santa Venetia, San Rafael, Novato, Tamalpais Valley in Mill Valley, Ryan Avenue in Mill Valley) that used to flood historically have benefited immensely from flood mitigation projects
- 5) The Sycamore Triangle neighborhood desperately needs help so it won't suffer the same kind of flood ever again. Many short-term, intermediate and long-term goals were discussed. Here are some specific action steps that have been planned:

Short-Term & Intermediate Action Plan

- a) The Marin County Board of Supervisors approved initiation of the Watershed Management Program at its July 17, 2006 meeting. The Watershed Management Program will establish a decision framework to guide watershed protection and enhancement activities beginning with the watersheds currently managed by the Marin County Flood Control District (flood zones and county service areas). The program, in cooperation with the Marin County Stormwater Pollution Prevention Program (MCSTOPPP), would provide significant opportunities for stakeholder participation.

The on-going Ross Valley Watershed Improvement Program is the County's pilot planning effort. Complementary to this effort, planning for top priority watersheds including the Mill Valley watershed (Arroyo Corte Madera del

Presidio) will be implemented in 2007 based on factors including ecological integrity, environmental enhancement opportunities, flood damage reduction, existing planning efforts and community support. The Department of Public Works (DPW) has authorized three new staff positions to implement the program. DPW is currently working to fill those positions.

- b) [The Marin County DPW is working to install additional rain gauge/monitoring stations and establish hydrology models along the Arroyo Corte Madera del Presidio Creek in Mill Valley to better predict flooding.](#)
- c) DPW collects stream gauge and precipitation data to guide Department decisions and evaluate the need for flood control capital improvements. The DPW stream gauge and precipitation data is also used by the National Weather Service (NWS) along with a number of other sophisticated global weather monitoring and modeling efforts to develop weather forecasts. Professional meteorologists at the NWS monitor and report on the changing weather data and model results 24 hours a day 7 days a week. The County Office of Emergency Services (County OES) relies on the NWS forecast to activate emergency status. The County OES determines how emergency information related to flooding and flood response is communicated to outside agencies and the general public.
- d) The County Office of Emergency Services (OES) and Mill Valley Fire Dept are fine-tuning the MEANS emergency notification system; a newer, improved version is referred to as TENS.
- e) DPW submitted a Notice of Intent to the California Office of Emergency Services for a Local Hazard Mitigation Grant Program. This Grant Program is funded by FEMA. Applications were mailed to property owners located in the floodplain the week of September 10, 2006.
- f) The Marin County DPW is conducting a topographic survey of the Arroyo Corte Madera del Presidio Creek (will include identification of choke points, how rainfall affects amount of runoff, and how certain physical characteristics affect the flow of water). Once this survey is completed, which is expected in late Oct or early Nov, Stetson Engineers will be able to complete its report on the flood. This report is being paid for by the City of Mill Valley and the Marin County DPW. The DPW staff has requested that the following areas be covered in Stetson's report: evaluate bridges, pump stations, use of cisterns, diversion of water to Terwilliger marsh, etc. (Note: Stetson's earlier report, which was also paid for by the City of Mill Valley, was never finalized. It was merely a "windshield" survey—i.e., a cursory report on creek/water flow conditions in the neighborhood.)
- g) Sedimentation, vegetation, bank erosion of the Arroyo Corte Madera del Presidio Creek are concerns. The Marin County DPW held a "Creek Walk" on Friday, September 1 to assess the condition of the creek before the 2006 rainy season. A

Clean-Up Day will be scheduled later this Fall, so identified problems can be addressed (e.g., removal of debris, bank improvements, etc.).

- h) Marin County DPW Director Farhad Mansourian will talk to the Mill Valley DPW Director Wayne Bush about the City's storm drain cleaning program.
- i) Supervisor McGlashan said he will look into the specific language of Measure A, which defined Miller Ave (in Mill Valley) as a major thoroughfare, to see if funds are associated with that for possible drainage improvements, releveling, resurfacing, etc.
- j) On the above point, as with all other development issues in Mill Valley, every STA member (and all residents in general) were encouraged to attend and speak up at Planning Commission and City Council meetings re: planned development projects to ensure that water control/containment/runoff/erosion/creek effect/setbacks/flood mitigation/permeable surfaces are being addressed. All development in the Mill Valley watershed (whether they be in the canyons, on the hillsides, in the STA neighborhood, along major thoroughfares, or part of the Miller Avenue Precise Plan) MUST address these issues before being approved.
- k) The Marin County Flood Control and Water Conservation District (see <http://www.co.marin.ca.us/depts/pw/main/floodcontrol.cfm>) is holding its next Flood Control Zone 3 Advisory Board meeting in November (tentative date: November 7 – Tim Hampton will notify us of the exact date, time and place). Every district will discuss its major programs at this meeting. Supervisor McGlashan asked DPW staff to make sure to prepare a full report on Flood Control Zone 3 (Mill Valley). STA representatives will attend.

Long-Term Action Plan

- a) In terms of long-term projects, it was generally agreed that a comprehensive, engineered solution is needed. This will be expensive, take a long time to plan/implement, and require significant political support. The “old school” approach (i.e., building big, deep concrete channels) is no longer desirable or recommended. So, this long-term plan will need to address all of the following (and more): Drains, new/raised/removed bridges, pipes, pumping stations, cisterns, using wetlands as diversion areas, amending bermed/built-up areas that create a “holding pond or bowl” effect in the STA neighborhood, etc.