

**SPECIAL MEETING of the ROSS TOWN COUNCIL  
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 2016**

---

**1. 7:00 p.m. Commencement.**

Present: Mayor Katie Hoertkorn; Mayor Pro Tempore Carla Small; Council Member P. Beach Kuhl; Council Member Elizabeth Brekhus; and Council Member Elizabeth Robbins.

**2. Posting of agenda.**

Town Manager Joe Chinn reported that the agenda was posted according to government requirements.

**3. Discussion and presentation on Winship Avenue Bridge Project.**

Public Works Director John Moe summarized the staff report and recommended that the Council conduct a public meeting to discuss and receive input from the Council and the public related to the replacement of the Winship Avenue Bridge.

Brent Lemon, Project Manager, Quincy Engineering, explained that initially at this location they were to review the current condition of the bridge and try to maintain the existing structure and develop a scope to address the needs within the preventative maintenance program. The lead consultant conducted an evaluation and conclusions were reached, and in this case, the existing issues associated with the existing structure were beyond the scope and funding of the preventative maintenance program. They are at the front end of the process, which is called the preliminary engineering and environmental studies. Three public input points will occur, one occurring tonight, another meeting 6 to 8 months from now with design team addressing comments from this meeting and presenting a more refined project footprint and discussion around impacts with proposed project. Then a third meeting will occur once the environmental document is circulated. This is an 18 to 24 month process for environmental clearance and about one year of final design efforts to yield a project that could then be bid for construction. The construction would occur in a full construction season taking around 5 to 6 months. After the second meeting, they will have a recommended preferred bridge alternative and discuss aesthetics such as features to enhance the visibility of this project. Conceptually, they provided several boards for the Council to review that identified the conceptual layout based on the width requirement for a sidewalk. Also, this layout shows the majority of improvements proposed will reside and exist within the Town's right-of-way with exception of some retaining walls that will need to be implemented for the channel.

Mario Quest, Quincy Engineering, added that this bridge is 105 years old and the bridge rating is 53. He then provided several graphics showing the two openings, existing grade on the channel, and elevation sections. They are looking at a basic thin slab bridge. The railing is an approved crash tested railing.

Ray Weiss, Environmental Specialist, Quincy Engineering, discussed the environmental issues and site conditions. They must look at ways to mitigate or reduce impacts. It is important to look at environmental impacts and develop a better design. They conducted some project scoping, looked at sensitive habit and community concerns in order to incorporate those into

## February 9, 2016 Minutes

the design of the ultimate product. They must determine the technical studies to prepare their documents. The area of potential effect is a map that shows the project footprint and preliminary design elements. They are looking at public outreach, listening to concerns and incorporate those into their process. Caltrans requires several technical studies to be used for the Town's CEQA (*California Environmental Quality Act*) process. There's steelhead, which is a federally protected species and all the riparian areas around the creek along with nesting birds. Noise and traffic will be considered as well and community impacts in general to residential properties. They will also consider permitting, which is regulated by Army Corp of Engineers and Fish and Wildlife. There are also water quality impacts that will be reviewed as well.

Project Manager Lemon added that the scope of work includes preliminary engineering, environmental clearance, and right-of-way acquisition and design work necessary to replace the bridge. The design would comply with all environmental requirements and would result in a bid ready package to be submitted to the Town and Caltrans for construction approval. The overall process is about a 3-year process, 18-24 month environmental process. In terms of next steps, they want to receive Council and public input in order to incorporate the input received. Then come back in 6 to 8 months to share how those elements have been incorporated and addressed and then public circulation of the document along with a third public meeting. At that point, they will go into an 8 to 12 month process to generate bridge design plans and construction contract documents.

Council Member Kuhl asked for clarification that the roadway is not sufficiently wide enough and the plan is to widen the roadway to 12-foot lanes and add a pedestrian sidewalk on one side. Project Manager Lemon explained that the actual dimensions required is 11-foot lanes, so the total width is 22 ft. and the existing width is 18 ft., with an additional 4 ft. of width along with a 6-foot wide pedestrian walkway. Council Member Kuhl added that the current walls would be eliminated to accomplish that additional width. Project Manager Lemon responded in the affirmative. There is more than ample width within the existing Town right-of-way to construct the permanent bridge and approaches. The only exception would be the wing walls.

Town Manager Joe Chinn noted that the proposed replacement bridge would be designed to be approximately 51 ft. long, 30.33 ft. wide with two 11-foot lanes with a 6-foot sidewalk on the north side of the bridge as noted in the staff report.

Council Member Brekhus pointed out that the Council was approached and told there were dollars available to study either replacement or repair of the bridge. The Council never voted on replacement of the bridge and this is the Council's first review and asked if it would be appropriate to make a decision on this. If the Town wants to look at possible repair and feasibility, what are the Council's options, which she felt should be explored due to the seismic and hydrology concerns. Project Manager Lemon noted that formal presentation and background was given at the February 2014 Council meeting when the Quincy Engineering contract was approved.

Mayor Pro Tempore Small added that they approved the contract in order to receive more information because they did not have enough information to make a determination. They needed more engineering study and more understanding of what was going on to understand their options. She did not totally understand if their options were clarified in 2014. Tonight, they are receiving that information and understanding the condition of the bridge. This is the

## February 9, 2016 Minutes

very beginning of this entire process. They will hear from members of the public and Council and then look at their next steps.

Council Member Kuhl recalled that they were approving this contract in order to have a study, which would provide the necessary information to make the decision about whether to do a replacement or repair.

Mayor Hoertkorn added that more information is needed as to why the bridge is unable to be repaired. Council Member Kuhl understood the report, which strongly recommends replacement due to the poor condition of the bridge. Project Manager Lemon stated once the decision was made relative to Caltrans funds associated with preventative maintenance funding, that really they were looking at a bridge replacement as being more appropriate and guiding the team to look at replacement as a primary option. The other items associated that are critical to comply with federal requirements to remain eligible to replace the bridge are the capacity of a 100-year event and to minimize impacts to the creek. The profile must be raised and once they establish that profile and opening, there is no way to maintain the character of the existing bridge and lift it in that fashion and create the hydraulic opening. Replacement becomes the only option to address those specific requirements. There is not a feasible way of getting the hydraulic opening large enough with the existing configurations that exist today. With a sufficiency rating close to 50 and with the age of the structure beyond the 100-year mark, they will not be able to show a benefit to repair the bridge. It is not feasible to create the hydraulic opening and maintain the existing structure.

Mayor Pro Tempore Small added that is why the contract was awarded to receive such information. She looks forward to hearing from the public. She thanked Quincy Engineering for answering questions from the public earlier today in order for the public to feel comfortable and understand the process.

Council Member Robbins asked how much does this existing bridge aggravate the flooding situation and how much longer would this bridge last. Project Manager Lemon added that it is an unknown factor in terms of how long the structural criteria degrades. From 0-10 the structural condition is a 4, once it drops to a 3, Caltrans mandates immediate action to be taken. James Reilly, Stetson Engineering, provided a diagram showing a profile of the creek and water surface during a 100-year flood event. At the bridge there is a backwater effect, which occurred during the 2005 flood. During the 1982 flood, Army Corps of Engineers identified high water marks, and found that the water reached 40.4 ft., which was a larger flood than 2005, so as their model predicts the water surface was around 39 ft. In the future, with other programs, if they leave the bridge in place, the effect will be more pronounced. This configuration where the bottom of the bridge is raised will provide enough clearance and opening to be able to accommodate any event.

Council Member Brekhus asked with increased widening of the bridge openings, is it anticipated that the water would flow faster. Project Manager Lemon expects the water to flow faster, but as part of their work, they are going to mitigate those actions and protect the channel from erosions. Council Member Brekhus asked about downstream properties and what measures will be taken. Project Manager Lemon noted that they must go through the CEQA process and during that process they will extend their review farther downstream and evaluate any significant impacts.

## February 9, 2016 Minutes

Council Member Kuhl added that at this point they have not studied the impacts downstream. Project Manager Lemon responded they typically will review the change to the FEMA floodplain as part of the environmental process. In addition they will look at the steady state flow condition downstream, any additional flow, velocity and erosion. They will then identify protection measures. Council Member Kuhl stated that ultimately this project would include downstream changes as well. Project Manager Lemon added that the downstream water level and velocity would be the same. Only with upstream will there be a change. Downstream there is no effect.

Mayor Hoertkorn opened the public comment on this item.

Chris Martin, former Council member, Shady Lane resident, noted that the Council did pass Resolution No. 1846, awarding progression design engineering contract for replacement of the Winship Bridge. The staff report indicated that previous studies conducted by CIC determined that the bridge needed replacement. Not to negate preservation, but a resolution was passed two years ago in regard to replacement. Concerning the retaining walls downstream, timing is great for this project. Army Corps is starting Unit 4 project. When the Town looked at the Lagunitas Bridge it was a non-conforming design, narrower than the Caltrans requirements and the concerns were slowing down traffic. If possible, he suggested narrowing the Winship Bridge as well to help reduce speeds traveled.

Peter Brekhus, former Council member, Winship resident, discussed flooding when he served on the Council and pointed out the design issues and considerations with respect to the design of the project itself. The original idea was to involve Sleepy Hollow, Fairfax and San Anselmo, Fairfax and San Anselmo refused to participate in flood control. This project was designed to handle flows and there were 14 local projects Ross believed needed to be done. The Winship Bridge was never identified. As to his involvement, he has continuously been involved in the operation of flood control improvements in Ross and flood patterns. He has observed the flood control projects and operation and characteristics of flooding at Winship Bridge. With all due respect to Stetson Engineering, he did not care what their model stated, the fact of the matter is that water has never gone over that bridge. This is from personal observations. There is no blockage, as he understands. He did not see a justification and urged the Council not to move forward due to all the unknowns.

John Crane, Winship resident, expressed many concerns about this project. If widened that would put the water underneath his home. If flow is changed, he felt his home would flood.

Gypsy, Winship resident, objected to the change in water flow. She is worried that her bank will erode and cause her house to have foundation problems and possibly slide down the bank. She wanted to know what assurances are in place to protect her house and bank. She has two redwood trees and wanted those trees protected as well. During construction, she expressed concern for all the dust, debris and noise. Also, she expressed concern for the owls that live in the area. She objected to construction vehicles parking on Winship. She further desired a legal document outlining the fact that her home, redwood trees and bank will be protected.

Nancy McCarthy, Wellington resident, expressed concern for the concrete wings, which she found unnecessary. No one knows what will happen in San Anselmo. She desired the option of

**February 9, 2016 Minutes**

repair to the bridge to be considered. She further expressed concern for bay trees and redwood trees being cut down.

There being no further public testimony on this matter, the Mayor closed the public portion and brought the matter back to the Council for discussion.

Project Manager Lemon reiterated that the bridge structural condition is rated a 4, and there are foundational elements subject to the channel degrading. The cost effectiveness of federal dollars requested would be much more prudent with a replacement and that is the backdrop of the initial effects of trying to implement a strategy of maintaining the existing. Also, the hydraulic opening is insufficient. There is a design process that the Town can exercise with approval to Caltrans to narrow the bridge beyond indicated. Proposed is a standard width, but they can work with Caltrans on the design. In terms of the design features above the roadway, they would look for public input in regard to railings, texture treatments, staining elements, lighting, etc. In terms of the federal eligibility, Caltrans indicated that the federal funds would be more cost effective spent on replacement rather than repair.

Council Member Brekhus asked if there is an estimate in regard to repairing the bridge. Project Manager Lemon stated that there has been no cost created for repair. In their scope of work, looking at repair and maintenance option was not part of their work effort. Ballpark figures is around \$50,000 to \$100,000 range in terms of what level of detail is requested. Typically, on a bridge with deficiencies noted, it is engineering fundamental basics. It is not possible to look at a retrofit option and pass the flow as an example. From their engineering experience and coordination efforts with Caltrans, if they need to achieve this result it will require such structural elements to be revisited and removed in terms of hydraulics.

Council Member Brekhus asked if funds are available to repair this bridge to improve the floodwater capacity. Hugh Davis, Marin County Flood Control representative, responded that it would be very difficult to improve the floodwater capacity with the existing structure. The advisory board would have to make that decision in regard to available funds for repair. The flood district will support whatever project the Town decided to move forward with that has a flood control element to it.

Mayor Pro Tempore Small pointed out that this bridge is not able to be repaired and meet the flood hydraulic requirements. In 2005, the Town of Ross paid the highest dollar amount in the lawsuits between Fairfax, San Anselmo and Ross. Since then a storm water management ordinance was passed and they replaced the Lagunitas Bridge. They must at least move forward on this process. They must continue the next 6 to 8 months and review a more refined design and include the ADR (*Advisory Design Review*) Group and review the 20-foot clearance. The EIR (*Environmental Impact Report*) will address several neighbor concerns. A resolution was passed as noted by former Council Member Martin. To stop at this point and ask for more information on repair is delaying the process.

Council Member Kuhl believed they have no option but to replace this bridge, which is a realistic and sensible option. He agreed to move forward on the studies of replacing the bridge. He is not in favor of spending more money to investigate a potential for repair. There is no realistic repair that will address what needs to be accomplished.

**February 9, 2016 Minutes**

Council Member Robbins stated that it is inevitable that they must replace the bridge. She agreed that the bridge should be narrower as suggested by former Council Member Martin.

Council Member Brekhus supported having staff visit the flood control district and see if funds are available to analyze repair efforts. Mayor Pro Tempore Small would not want to spend any funds on repairing this bridge. It would be throwing good money away. Council Member Kuhl concurred.

Mayor Hoertkorn agreed with the majority of the Council to move forward with the study as well as making the bridge narrower to slow down speeds traveled.

Town Manager Chinn indicated that staff would move forward as discussed tonight. Any members of the public can continue to provide comments to Public Works. Mayor Pro Tempore Small recommended having the ADR review. Project Manager Lemon believed ADR review would be most beneficial between their second public input meeting and before the environmental document is circulated.

**4. Adjournment.**

Mayor Hoertkorn moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:10 p.m.

---

Kathleen Hoertkorn, Mayor

**ATTEST:**

---

Linda Lopez, Town Clerk