

SPECIAL MEETING of the ROSS TOWN COUNCIL MONDAY, OCTOBER 24, 2016

1. 7:00 p.m. Commencement.

Mayor Katie Hoertkorn; Mayor Pro Tempore Elizabeth Robbins; Council Member Elizabeth Brekhus; Council Member Beach Kuhl; and Council Member Rupert Russell.

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 Replacement Project.

Town Manager Joe Chinn summarized the staff report and recommended that the Council conduct a public hearing to discuss and receive input from the Council and the public related to a proposed alternative bridge alignment for the Winship Avenue Bridge Replacement Project.

Mayor Hoertkorn asked the Council if it would be helpful to have Town Manager Chinn read the conclusion of the minutes from the previous Winship meeting since they were not included in the packet. Council Member Brekhus responded that she did search out the minutes and would like them included in future meetings.

Town Manager Chinn indicated the minutes are available online and would be included in the future.

Council Member Brekhus recollected that they did not know if localized flooding funds could be used notwithstanding State funds. She stated there had never been a Council vote to replace these bridges. When she got on Council, she was surprised to learn there was a replacement project in the works, and there was no comparison between repairing the bridge and replacing the bridge. At the February meeting, there was no action item on the agenda for the Council to vote on, so there has been no vote. There's simply been direction to continue studying the replacement of the bridge. One of the issues she had requested was that we look at the difference between repair and replacement and explore financial options for repairing the bridge.

Town Manager Chinn responded that at the last Winship meeting held on February 9th, it was explained why repairing the bridge doesn't work from an engineering stand point. He then read the Council's voting preferences from the February 9, 2016 minutes:

"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.

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Council Member Robbins stated that it is inevitable that we 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 to 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."

Brent Lemon, Quincy Engineering, showed the configuration of the bridge and explained that the design team reviewed ways to reduce impacts caused by the wing wall, so this was the original configuration replacing the existing bridge on the existing alignment. They looked at adjusting the alignment to reduce impacts on the southeasterly parcel. Before the Council is two alternatives, one is to replace bridge to match the existing alignment. On both alternatives the upstream impacts in terms of tree removal are identical. The wing walls, retaining walls and in channel improvements are identical in terms of tree removal within the reach of the project. As they looked at the design approach for the alignment, due to the close proximity of the two homes, they knew they needed to maintain this existing alignment, so they look at possibly swinging the alignment to the north. They came up with the alternative alignment that's included in the Council's packet where they hold the approach off Sir Francis Drake Boulevard and begin a slight curve at centerline station 11. They have a 400-foot radius curve and come out onto a new intersection alignment on the easterly approach, which swings the bridge and its potential impacts quite a distance away from the parcel on the southeast. They looked at a tiered retaining wall system to channel the water downstream otherwise the water would erode the trees. They believe they can maintain a majority of the trees within the area. In terms of construction type, they would still be looking at a foundation type that is a spread footing on top of bedrock about 10 ft. deep measured from the existing channel bottom. Excavate 10 ft. down from the bridge abutment footing and cantilever out or reduce the amount of footing on this portion of the wall, which would have fewer impacts than excavating down through the entire root system of the trees. This is their engineering recommendation of what they believe is a better solution to avoid the potential impacts to the trees. If there were not a concern about minimizing impacts to this parcel and trees, they would recommend the existing alignment option. The channel is owned and privately held by the adjacent property owners, so with this option of swinging the alignment they have more right-of-way acquisition from the Almond property upstream of the bridge. Whereas the original option stays within the confines of the existing right-of-way line and the other issue was the wing wall. It is a much lesser right-of-way acquisition than the revised alignment.

Mayor Hoertkorn believed swinging the alignment will dramatically change the intersection and asked about the unintended consequences. Engineer Lemon responded that their recommendation would be to place stop signs on all legs. Also, this profile will be a slight vertical curve, so vehicles resting at the stop sign would no longer have headlights pointed up into the property. Headlight glare will be minimal because it is splitting the two parcels. Whereas on the existing alignment it more directly comes into the parcel on the easterly side of the bridge, so

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with swinging out of the alignment, he is not sure if that will have more of a direct impact on headlight glare, which must be reviewed.

Council Member Brekhus clarified that with both alternatives there will be a crest in the road. Engineer Lemon explained that the profile before the Council last time was a slight vertical curve and what is shown today is fairly consistent with the realignment, so about a 5% grade as one approaches going over the structure with about 4% on the other side (easterly side). On the existing alignment headlight glare would be limited to the one parcel. If the profile is not changed, it is essentially a flat profile grade, so the headlight glare would be at the base of the house.

Council Member Brekhus stated if it changed, the impact is to both parcels. Engineer Lemon added that if they went with the alignment swing, essentially the direction of the headlight glare would almost split the two parcels. With vehicles stopped at the stop sign with the new alignment there will be no more glare than exists today, because vehicles will be pointed downward at a slope of 4%. It will be a shorter duration in motion until it crests and starts downward.

Council Member Brekhus desired a clarification of what the colors are depicting in the drawings presented to the Council. Engineer Lemon explained that the blue areas are roadway and the red areas are the bridge, which represents wall work and bridge railings. Council Member Brekhus asked how much land must be acquired from 90 Sir Francis Drake. Engineer Lemon has not performed any right-of-way calculations. Typically that will be done once an alignment is selected rather than conduct right-of-way calculations for multiple alignments. They are trying to achieve an alignment that can then be fully developed and then evaluated.

Mayor Hoertkorn stated when they look at the straight version vs. the curved version the road with the curved version looks so much more narrow, which is very dangerous. With the straight version the driveway looks much safer, which is her concern in regard to unintended consequences. Engineer Lemon explained it is essentially out letting into an uncontrolled area, which is not what they want to see in terms of traffic engineering.

Council Member Kuhl clarified that there are trees to the left of the driveway, but this reconfiguration can occur without impacting the trees. Engineer Lemon responded in the affirmative. Those trees would not be affected.

Engineer Lemon discussed existing width to proposed width. They typically talk about bridges from an out-to-out width perspective, so the existing out-to-out width is about 26 ft. from outside edge to outside edge and the proposed bridge is 4 ft. 4 in. more than that. The widths developed are a design standard from the American Association of State Highway Transportation Officials (AASHTO) standards, which are used by the Federal Highway Administration in administering projects. They are defaulted to a standard to secure federal funding. For this particular location that is determined based on design speed and the average daily traffic. The average daily traffic is under 400 vehicles per day, which is based on actual peak hour counts back in late 2015. The proposed replacement bridge would be designed to be approximately 51 ft. long, 30.33 ft. wide, which consists of a 22-foot roadway (*two nine-foot lanes with two-foot shoulders*) and a six-foot sidewalk on the north side of the bridge. In terms of design speed that is as narrow as it gets. 22 ft. is considered a minimum width standard to be achieved. If the Council is looking to minimize the width, that can be done through a design exception with Caltrans. On the roadway section it

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would make sense to pursue a design exception that would accommodate more closely the existing approaches on each side. To maintain eligibility for the Highway Bridge Program they are in, the absolute minimum that must be maintained is 20 ft.

Mayor Pro Tempore Robbins expressed concern to construct this freeway scale bridge for this tiny neighborhood.

Council Member Brekhus asked what happens when they increase the hydraulic capacity to these bridges. What happens to the retaining walls and asked who is liable. Engineer Lemon stated from an engineer standpoint he could not advise on liability issues. They review achieving a design standard, passing a flow event and sizing the bridge and opening underneath the bridge to pass that design flow event. They are trying to minimize as much as practical any changes to elevation in the flood way.

James Reilly, Stetson Engineering, stated in the future they are looking at the probability upstream there will be bridges removed and replaced upstream, so more water will be coming down the channel in the future, which is one reason to raise the bridge. In terms of increasing water surface or velocity, from this project alone there will not be a significant increase downstream. They do not expect any added erosion as a result of this project.

Council Member Brekhus clarified that Engineer Reilly is not present on behalf of the Town of Ross, but as consultant for Quincy Engineering, and in that capacity, she asked is his opinion that retaining walls will not fail downstream of this bridge replacement. Engineer Reilly pointed out that was out of their scope to review the condition of the current retaining walls and existing stability. Council Member Brekhus asked if they would ever receive that data. Engineer Lemon responded that the scope includes reviewing the reach of the channel where the existing hydraulic grade line is achieved. There will be a localized benefit of reducing the flood elevation in the vicinity of the bridge.

Engineer Reilly added that once they have a design then they will prepare a hydraulic report. Council Member Kuhl asked whichever of the two being discussed tonight, the hydraulically effect will be the same. Engineer Reilly responded that there would be a very small difference if any difference. Council Member Kuhl explained that a hydraulic study would not help the Council select which of the two alternatives since they will be very similar.

Mayor Hoertkorn opened the public testimony on this item.

Tiffany Banks, Winship resident, understands the need to redo the bridge, but it is really upsetting that in all the preliminary plans and in discussion today there is a possibility to save some of the trees, but she wants to save all the trees. They are on private property. These are protected redwoods. If they remove even one of those trees it will damage the roots of the rest of the trees. There are several options to consider. For her, there will be a fight if the Town starts removing the protected trees. She recommended the *"save the redwoods plan."* When building that wall review all options to not impact the trees. Cutting one redwood tree is not an option, in her view.

John Crane, Sir Francis Drake resident, felt it is a shame to replace this bridge. He likes the integrity of the town and the rustic charm. There are still a lot of flood issues upstream and

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downstream that have not been fully resolved. This bridge will improve the potential to reduce flooding, but before they rush into it, they must consider preserving the integrity of the Town and the trees. This is a gorgeous bridge and it will be sad to see it go. He has lived in Ross for 25 years and watched the river rise and there could be downstream consequences of potential erosion. He asked the Council not to rush into a decision due to the federal funds available. All aspects must be considered before the Council moves forward.

Nancy McCarthy, Wellington resident, added that it is not a matter of "*Plan A*" or "*Plan B*" but a question of whether to do it at all. They do not know if this bridge will have any impact downstream. There is no knowledge or plan of what will occur upstream or downstream. It seems there are insufficient answers to all the questions.

Chris Neumann, Winship resident, believed a headlight study would be beneficial to make sure his home is not impacted. He questioned why Ross is doing the bridge first before San Anselmo. They must review the bridge design at design review because they need to adhere to Town standards.

Peter Nelson, Circle Drive resident, stated that having the bridge comply with ADA standards is appropriate, but he did express concern about the retaining walls and narrowing the channel in terms of downstream impacts.

There being no further public testimony on this item, the Mayor brought the matter back to the council for discussion and direction.

Council Member Kuhl expressed concern for the removal of the redwood trees. Also, there is a suggestion from the public to doing nothing, but the Council has been told that the bridge is unsafe so something must be done.

Mayor Pro Tempore Robbins asked if the width of the bridge was made smaller, would that help to lessen the impact on the redwood trees. Engineer Lemon explained that the width itself is not such a determining factor to the direct impact to the redwoods. It is more related to the abutment placement within the channel and then the redirecting from the abutment and the downstream flows and being able to protect the redwoods. Unless they are constricting the channel more and lessening the channel opening, they would have to be in to the channel more to have less of an impact to the redwoods. The alignment shifts helps dramatically because they are moving the footings away from the redwoods. What would dictate the more direct effects on the redwoods are the placement of the abutments and the location of the wall.

Council Member Russell asked if either of these proposals have different impacts on the trees. Engineer Lemon explained that the existing alignment has the greatest impact on the trees. They must discuss with an arborist the best mitigation strategy that will help the trees survive. There will be a greater likelihood of saving more trees if they shift the alignment. Either proposal requires right-of-way acquisition in order to construct the project. The Town is the lead agency for implementing the project. The Town will take all actions relative to CEQA approval and all acquisitions will need to be done in the name of the Town. Council Member Brekhus clarified that the federal government will reimburse the Town 100% for those acquisitions. Engineer Lemon responded in the affirmative.

Town Manager Chinn explained that this project design is funded 100% from the federal highway bridge program with the funds administered through Caltrans. He pointed out that it is a Council option to go from 22 ft. to 20 ft. A minimum of 20 ft. is needed for the travel lanes. They need a 20-foot roadway otherwise they do not receive federal funding. They must consider strollers and wheelchairs traveling across the bridge on the sidewalk.

Council Member Russell desired to know the current standard and the width of the Lagunitas Bridge. Engineer Lemon agreed to review the Lagunitas Bridge.

Council Member Kuhl noted that if the decision is which alignment to select that could occur tonight.

Council Member Brekhus is not supporting moving forward. She feels this is an old historic bridge. This bridge was admitted for the historic registry along with the other five bridges in Town. This is a great old historic bridge that should be reinforced and not replaced. If she had more information to point out this is there only option and it is unsafe, but they have no information other than federal funds. There is not a good understanding of what are the other options in terms of reinforcement. She did not have enough information. Town staff must review because this is a historical bridge. She expressed concern for the consequences of this to the Town if the bridge hydrology changes and there are impacts to downstream properties, the Town will have lawsuits. She is not supporting Plan A or Plan B, but believed the second plan has less of an impact on the redwoods.

Council Member Russell continues to ask what the design standards are for the other bridges in Town such as how old and in what condition are the other bridges in Town. Mario Quest, Quincy Engineering, explained that the bridges in the Town of Ross have an efficiency rating from 0-100. 50 or below rating is eligible for replacement. 50 to 80 rating are offered for rehabilitation. This particular bridge is rated 53, and the other bridges in Town are right around the low 50s.

Town Manager Chinn stated that the other bridges are in process of being evaluated. They are all included in the highway bridge program. Engineer Lemon stated once bridges are placed into the program it is either from structural deficiency or a functional obsolescence or both. Caltrans would not participate in retrofitting this bridge because it would be more costly than replacing it. Within the confines of their stewardship and administering funds, it would become ineligible from a funding perspective to retrofit and try to keep the existing bridge in place.

Council Member Russell asked if this bridge goes first, is it the one in the worst condition. Engineer Lemon explained that the local agency pursues a project and programs a project and a timeframe starts ticking in terms of eligibility. From the time of the program inception and when they first draw the reimbursement funds, there is a 10-year period to get the project to construction. The funds have an eligibility deadline, so they are on a clock right now of potential expiration of eligibility funding, about three years into that 10-year timeframe.

Council Member Russell asked if this bridge would have the greatest hydrological impact. Engineer Reilly stated that the original master plan prepared for the County envisioned improving the Ross Valley system from the downstream up, which made sense. The idea is to start

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downstream and march upstream. The County is working with the Army Corp of Engineers on the concrete channel, which is called Unit 4 that extends from Sir Francis Drake Boulevard all the way down to the Bay. The next logical bridge is Winship and after that downtown San Anselmo, center street, etc. That is the sequence the Ross Valley program is moving into and that is why Winship Bridge is in line.

Council Member Kuhl added that all these points being raised are well taken, but they do not affect which alignment to select tonight. The bridge, as he understands it, is now dangerous. If they want to talk about Town liability, if something happens with that bridge, the Town will be liable.

Engineer Reilly added that this bridge was rated as a 4. All bridges have a service life, so this bridge is 100 years plus, and it's at the point that it is old and does not meet hydraulic criteria. This bridge has pretty much lived its life.

Mayor Hoertkorn understands that no one wants to replace this historic bridge due to its charm historic value, but Caltrans does not look at the historic value. They should at least see if they have enough votes to move forward with the alignment and then review the width issue. This must go before the Advisory Design Review (ADR) Group as well.

Town Manager Chinn explained that staff needs direction from the Council on the design and alignment in order for the consultants to move forward.

Council Member Kuhl favored moving forward with the Winship Avenue Bridge replacement and roadway realignment. Mayor Pro Tempore Robbins would rather maintain the existing alignment because she is not clear about the consequences. Engineer Lemon did not believe there is an overall adverse impact to parking and the egress and ingress to driveways is maintained unencumbered. Mayor Hoertkorn noted that there is no analysis in writing in that regard. Engineer Lemon stated that the difference between the two alignments is that they are trying to suspend or cantilever a portion of the wall, which means they use less footing, so there is less foundation depth in doing that than there would be to maintain the existing alignment. Mayor Hoertkorn pointed out that the report provided to the Council does not provide that analysis. The report does not provide enough information in writing for the Council to make a proper decision. Engineer Lemon stated that their current scope was limited to a single alternative. In fairness to the Council, they need to go back and work with Town staff to re-scope their work so they can more fully evaluate the items not in their current scope such as the glare study from the headlights and evaluate the two alternatives and come back with a more definitive alternative analysis. To maintain federal eligibility for the funding, they cannot go lower than 20 ft. between the curbs. In terms of the feasibility and repair they know enough from their experience and by looking at these details to maintain the character of the bridge, they would have to replace it as two arch barrels. It would become a new bridge. They would not be able to retrofit the bridge and meet the current seismic design codes and all the other codes required by Caltrans.

Council Member Brekhus did not understand why it is an impossible task to provide the Council with a scope or quote on retrofitting the bridge and in order to do so they would have to remove the bridge. She wanted to know the cost of retrofitting this bridge so that it is seismically safe.

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Engineer Lemon added that they could provide a scope to conduct a feasibility study that would involve destructive testing of the existing bridge, which would have to be done with local funds.

Council Member Brekhus pointed out that there has never been a Council decision or action taken by the Council on this matter. Council Member Kuhl added that from the minutes, direction was given to staff to not pursue a repair of the bridge, but to pursue a replacement of the bridge.

Mayor Hoertkorn stated that additional study is needed before they can make a decision on which of the two alignments to select. Council Member Kuhl appreciated being told verbally, but the answers must be provided in writing. Engineer Lemon noted that alternatively they could carry two alternatives through the environmental process. It would allow them to move forward and conduct the evaluation. By the time they conduct the level of study discussed, they might as well carry those two alternatives all the way. He understands that the Council desires a proposal on a minimum footprint. The minimum width known today would be the travel width of 20 ft. and they will work with staff on the sidewalk width. Also, to cover aesthetic appearance incorporation items into the project, they would come back for another public workshop prior to circulation of the environmental document that would focus strictly on aesthetic treatments.

Council Member Russell wanted to know the hydrological impacts and if it affects the alignment. Engineer Lemon noted that is part of the original scope.

Council Member Brekhus asked staff to notice within 500 ft. of this project because it is very important to several residents that will see a physical change, practically if there will be a decisions requested of the Council.

4. Adjournment.

Mayor Hoertkorn moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:40 p.m.

Kathleen Hoertkorn, Mayor

ATTEST:

Linda Lopez, Town Clerk