

Via Electronic Mail

To: Town of Ross, Mayor Elizabeth Brekhus,
Christa Johnson, Town Council
From: John Crane
Date: April 3, 2024

RE: Item 7c. Winship Bridge Contract Amendment #8 Approval

Mayor and Town Council:

What is the plan?

Ruinous outcomes can result when projects lack a viable plan. The failure of the district to deliver a workable plan for the Ross Valley Flood Control is a prime example. No funded, feasible plan has been shared with stakeholders, and what projects the county will be able to accomplish upstream and downstream of Winship Bridge, in the foreseeable future, is unknown.

With such uncertainty, is it wise to proceed? It is now established that flood control must include protection from harm for residents – a major stumbling block for SAFRR. Without a verified plan it is impossible to know what impacts the various components will have on overall flood control.

There are at least three major and seemingly insurmountable problems facing the Town of Ross:

Indemnification

Will the county protect the Town of Ross? When pushed, the county has a habit of offering co-indemnification with Towns from which they can bail. The Town of Ross and its residents are unlikely to find this acceptable.

Mitigation

It is well documented that Winship Bridge will increase flood risk for certain properties. What is the plan for implementing required mitigation measures for all the impacted homes? Who will be responsible for mitigation and the liability that goes with it? The last hydrological models showed that an increasing number of homes will be impacted by SAFRR.

Funding

The funding for Winship Bridge is a complicated mix of Federal, State, Local, Caltrans, Highway Bridge Programs (HBP) – many of which are stalled and unavailable. Is funding guaranteed for this project?

After wasting millions of dollars, the county is now facing major funding issues for flood control, sea level rise especially in Southern Marin, and more. Complicating matters is that there is an increase in deficits at county level which may affect construction and maintenance revenues for future flood control projects and more for years to come.

Summary

The Town of Ross and its residents have been misled repeatedly by county officials over the last six years. This has led to a lack of trust, accountability and transparency. Dissatisfaction with county malfeasance was reason enough for the Town of San Anselmo to pass Measure F and exit Flood Zone 9. The Flood Fee expires in 2027 and will likely not be renewed due to misguided policies, public officials and politicians.

The Town of Ross should be cautious of costly incurred damages and liability.

Respectfully,

John Crane
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