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This is a follow-up to the January 15 and 29, 2014 public meetings regarding the plans for the Pope/Chaucer bridge. Since at least the 1998 flood event in the San Francisquito Creek, the Crescent Park Neighborhood Association Board of Directors has been very involved in pressing for effective flood control measures for the creek. We have been frustrated by the 15-year delay in addressing that problem, but are encouraged by recent developments that indicate that progress is being made.

We have as our primary concern protecting the residents who suffered damage during the 1998 flooding, which we understand to have been a 40- to 50-year event, and to protect those and many other residents from future likely flooding events. The 1998 flood caused \$28 M damages, threatening life and property. We had another near miss in December 2012. Future events are likely to be even more catastrophic.

It is well understood that the existing Pope/Chaucer Street Bridge was **THE** biggest source of flooding upstream of East Palo Alto in the 1998 disaster, and there is no way to have a solution without redoing Pope/Chaucer now. Therefore, the Pope/Chaucer bridge replacement is a vital and urgent public safety project and needs to happen as soon as possible. There are thousands of properties and families at risk of flooding because of this bridge, and the community has waited long enough. We also observe that the current bridge is a public work designed in 1946 by Palo Alto staff and built and financed by Palo Alto and Menlo Park, and as such creates an ongoing absolute liability hanging over the local governments (and their taxpayer citizens) in the form of inverse condemnation and prescriptive easement lawsuits.

In parallel with fixing the Pope/Chaucer bridge, but without introducing any further delay in fixing that bridge, it is also important to put in place a "system" solution (i.e., fixing the other limiting bridges and creek "pinch" points along with 101-to-bay fixes already underway) with as good a fix as possible (for 40- to 50-year flood control). This system approach is within currently foreseeable funding, and without objectionable elements such as flood walls.

It's helpful to look at this project in two parts or phases. Part One – which has been referred to as the "Baseline" project – would completely remove the obstruction of the current bridge and replace it with a new bridge that has the same flow capacity as the natural capacity of the creek at that point in its reach. We emphasize that "natural capacity of the creek" means that the replacement bridge be

above-grade, without infrastructure in the creek channel. This would allow about the same flow as Middlefield and provide a 40-50 year flood protection. This will be a huge improvement compared to the current situation. This does not require flood walls. There is funding available, and this needs to move forward ASAP

Part Two would provide 100 year flood protection. There are various alternatives under consideration, including upstream retention, bypass culverts and/or flood walls. This may require replacement of Middlefield Bridge. There is no identified funding for this project, and the timing and approach are uncertain.

Achieving 100-year flood protection is desirable in the long term (for additional protection and to try to remove most of the affected properties from a FEMA-defined flood plain requiring flood insurance). However, that is not feasible now and we should not let the baseline project be distracted by FEMA requirements (like a 3-4 foot free-board) that might entail flood walls or other objectionable 100-year flood control options. We are not now going for 100-year flood control, and there is no point in installing objectionable FEMA conservative-engineering safeguards for now.

To the extent possible the Baseline project should have minimal impact to existing trees and vegetation in the creek channel and along the creek bank with an emphasis on preservation of the natural habitat and aesthetic appearance of the bridge area. On the other hand, objections about traffic, tree removal, roadway changes, construction operations, possible bank changes that might require stabilization, etc. should not be allowed to interfere with the overall public good. Those who argue for a "natural creek without any changes from current status" must understand that the current creek is anything but "natural" in that it has been changed over the years by Palo Alto, Menlo Park, creek-side residents, Caltrans, etc. in putting sub-capacity bridges in place, letting residents build into the creek, re-routing the creek between 101 and the bay to incorporate a golf course, airport, industrial park, etc. Removing these impediments or mitigating against them will restore the creek to its natural capacity which would have contained most if not all of the 1998 flood.

To the extent that the two "Baseline" bridge replacement alternatives ("Above-Grade Bridge" and "At-Grade Bridge") presented at the public meetings on January 15 & January 29, 2014 are designed to eventually work in conjunction with floodwalls to provide future 100-year protection, this should be scaled back to the extent any aspects of the designs are included solely to accommodate the flood wall solution. In addition, it would appear that an above-grade solution is essential to restore the natural creek capacity.

For example, it is important to take another look at the current designs, with a view toward departing from the conventional State Highway concrete approach, and striving for a more innovative and attractive form of steel structure, resulting in an arched bridge or other design that is fully above grade and that mitigates street elevation changes on the Palo Alto and Menlo Park sides.

We recommend the same comprehensive approach as outlined above for the design of the other four bridges in this section of the San Francisquito Creek, including the Newell Street Bridge.

In closing, we wish to emphasize that this is an urgent matter, involving protection of life and property, and so we urge you to proceed expeditiously.

Very truly yours,

Norman Beamer,
On behalf of the Crescent Park Neighborhood Association Board of Directors