



County of Monterey

Item No.

Board Report

Board of Supervisors
Chambers
168 W. Alisal St., 1st Floor
Salinas, CA 93901

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Receive a presentation from the County of Monterey Department of Emergency Management (DEM) regarding the development of a Pajaro Long-Term Recovery Plan for the unincorporated township of Pajaro severely impacted by the 2023 Pineapple Express Winter Storm and Subsequent Flooding in March.

It is recommended that the Board of Supervisors:

Receive a presentation from the County of Monterey Department of Emergency Management (DEM) regarding the development of a Pajaro Long-Term Recovery Plan for the unincorporated township of Pajaro severely impacted by the 2023 Pineapple Express Winter Storm and Subsequent Flooding in March.

SUMMARY:

Beginning on March 9th, 2023, through March 20th, of 2023, Monterey County was impacted a second time in the year by a series of intense winter storms/atmospheric rivers that brought hazardous conditions such as severe/heavy rain, strong winds, and severe flooding for the Community of Pajaro located in north Monterey County. At the onset of the storms, the County of Monterey Department of Emergency Management remained vigilant and activated the Emergency Operations Center to monitor the storms and engage with all local and state agencies to foster coordination between actors involved in responding to this weather event.

In the aftermath of the storms, the flooding in the township of Pajaro in north Monterey County caused substantial damage to critical infrastructure including homes, businesses, roads, levees, and wastewater piping. Further, substantial flooding of agricultural land and properties also occurred, while many other buildings and properties experienced damage from the strong winds and localized flooding caused by the rain, debris flows, and mudflows.

The Department of Emergency Management will be developing a community led Pajaro Recovery Task Force to identify long-term recovery initiatives and provide a recommendation to the Board of Supervisors for the use of Assembly Bill 102 monies as outlined in and upon adoption of the Pajaro Long-Term Recovery Plan

DISCUSSION:

The unincorporated township of Pajaro is in north Monterey County, adjacent to the Pajaro River. The community is located along the eastern bank of the river. The Pajaro River Watershed originates from 4,700 feet above sea level in the Diablo and Gabilan Ranges in San Benito County, drains a

1,300 square mile area, and flows for approximately 30 miles where it empties into Monterey Bay. The community of Pajaro has experienced a history of flooding over the years (1940, 1955, 1995, 1998, 2023), resulting in damages to critical infrastructure, housing, and agriculture.

An atmospheric river event brought heavy rain across Monterey County leading to a breach of the Pajaro Levee on March 10, 2023. This breach led to life-threatening flooding across the community of Pajaro and caused more than 3,000 residents-many of them low-income families-to evacuate their homes. Due to the impacts on sewer and water, the community was not able to re-enter the town until March 23.

2023 Disaster Impacts

- **Impacts to Economy:** Approximately \$600+million in damages and revenue loss to the agricultural industry countywide; Damage to 100 commercial structures with a total loss for business owners in an estimated amount of \$30,436,110.
- **Impacts to Health and Social Services:** Increased demand for social services as a result of disaster impacts including homeless services, Emergency Housing Vouchers, unemployment benefits, etc.; there is a potential for additional health risks due to mold if dwellings are not appropriately mediated; there is potential for an increase in the presence of mosquitos as a result of standing water. The Pajaro Rescue Mission was severely damaged and displaced all the guests in the program, they remain in the process of repairing damages.
- **Impacts to Housing:** While the damage assessments concluded around 250 homes with major damage or destroyed, it is important to note that the impacts to the community far exceed the reported numbers. Nearly every home in Pajaro has been impacted, even those that do not have high water marks or were not reported as damaged. It is estimated that the total damage caused by the flooding to be in the amount of \$93,947,336.
- **Impacts to Infrastructure:** The community experienced damage to roads, public water systems, sewage main, and the levee. The flooding also disrupted access to essential services like clean drinking water, gas and electricity for residents of the township which prevented the timely entry/return to the area after the flooding subsided.
- **Impacts to Natural and Cultural Resources:** There is damage to the local middle school, Agricultural Commissioner's satellite office (The Porter-Vallejo Mansion), and the historic water tower. Flooding can potentially cause erosion of the agricultural lands taking nutrients from the layers of soil and increasing degradation. Contaminated flood water can seep into underground water sources and contaminate the wells.

Short-Term / Intermediate Recovery Efforts to Date

The County of Monterey has been working to address immediate community lifeline needs that are essential to human health and safety or economic security. Lifelines are the most fundamental services in the community that, when stabilized, enable all other aspects of society to function. To date the following short-term and intermediate recovery efforts have taken place in the Pajaro Community:

- **Emergency Response and Language Equity:** The County provided response and recovery information in different languages including Spanish, Mixteco Alto, Mixteco Bajo and Triqui.
- **Response Equity:** The Emergency Operations Center activated the Equity Officer position to ensure emergency services provided meet the needs of the community.
- **Comfort and Hygiene Hubs:** The County provided bathrooms, showers, laundry, water, food, transportation, and medical care during the re-entry process and until such time that community lifelines could be restored.
- **Local Assistance Centers:** A local Assistance Center (LAC) was established to connect disaster survivors with government agencies, non-profit organizations, and other service providers to offer support and resources. Throughout its duration, the LAC served 1,141 households from Pajaro, and other flood impacted areas.
- **Disaster Recovery Centers:** A Disaster Recovery Center (DRC) was established by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and other government agencies, after the occurrence of a major disaster or emergency, to provide direct assistance and resources from the federal government to individuals and communities affected by the emergency.
- **Community Resource Center:** The Pajaro Middle School Community Resource Center was established for the purposes of connecting the community with Community Based Organizations. This proved to be a novel but vital initiative that catered to the diverse needs of the residents, becoming a hub of engagement, services, and resources for disaster-affected residents. The Community Resource Center was operational for 25 days, and in this period 23 organizations attended and provided support to 455 families.
- **Non-Congregate Sheltering:** The County established the Non-Congregate Shelter Program to provide affected residents emergency shelter while they repair their homes or seek new housing. During its operation the NCS Program has served over 80 families (260+ residents).

Post Disaster Long-Term Recovery

Post-Disaster Long-Term Recovery highlights the reality that, for a community faced with significant and widespread disaster impacts, preparedness, response, and recovery are not and cannot be separate and sequential efforts. The transition from response to recovery is not based upon a decisive point in time but occurs as a gradual process. As response needs lessen, recovery will increase. The transition process and the exact timeline vary based on the scale and scope of the disaster.

The County is committed to fostering a collaborative environment and establishing a comprehensive and coordinated approach for the recovery of the community's physical, economic, social, and environmental systems in the aftermath of a disaster. Our goal is to support the affected communities by providing timely and effective assistance, ensuring a resilient and sustainable recovery, and

enhancing the county's preparedness for future disasters. We aim to collaborate with stakeholders, leverage available resources, and prioritize equity and inclusivity in all aspects of our recovery efforts.

The guiding principles of the Pajaro long-term recovery efforts are intended to help the County and the Community work together to support survivor needs and build resilience through: Individual and Family Empowerment; Leadership and Local Primacy; Pre-Disaster Recovery Planning; Engaged Partnerships and Inclusiveness; Unity of Effort; Timeliness and Flexibility; Resilience and Sustainability; and Psychological and Emotional Recovery.

Whole Community Engagement

The key to closing equity gaps and resolving vulnerability is direct participation by impacted communities in the development and implementation of solutions and policy decisions that directly impact them. The main goal of this planning effort is to build community ownership to ensure the Pajaro community have a direct say over what is needed to survive and thrive. A successful recovery effort is not only inclusive of the whole community but is led by the community. Therefore, it is imperative that the County of Monterey take a different approach in the development and implementation of a Long-Term Recovery Plan for the Community of Pajaro.

Throughout the process the community lead by communicating priorities and needs; assist staff in identifying and prioritizing recovery initiatives; assist staff in making decisions about how monies are spent; engaging with their elected officials; receiving regular updates about the planning process; and participate in the implementation of the recovery initiatives.

Pajaro Disaster Recovery Manager and Community Liaison

The Monterey County Department of Emergency Management and the Monterey County Department of Health have partnered to identify staff that will be dedicated to a 6-12-month community based, intensive long-term recovery planning effort.

A Disaster Recovery Manager and a Community Liaison will guide the county departments, special districts, state agencies, federal agencies, and non-profit partners in partnering with the Pajaro Community to identify long-term recovery initiatives, timelines, funding, sources, and responsible agencies.

A Community Liaison will be made available to support these planning efforts and be the primary contact for the community to ask questions, communicate priorities, and advocate concerns and needs. It is the purpose of this position to ensure that the community needs are heard and implemented where appropriate.

Recovery Office

The Department of Emergency Management recommends establishing a physical location for the Recovery Office in the community of Pajaro for the purposes of providing a physical location for community members to access the resources they need to recover from natural disasters. Additionally, having a central location for recovery efforts allows for better coordination between agencies and organizations, resulting in more effective and efficient support for the community.

The community of Pajaro is limited in space for government services; what little space was available has been impacted by the disaster. As such, the Department of Emergency Management intends to procure a mobile office trailer to be located in the community of Pajaro for the duration of the planning efforts.

Pajaro Recovery Task Force and Organization

The Pajaro Recovery Task Force will be developed by the County to serve as the steering committee for planning efforts. The primary responsibility of the Pajaro Recovery Task Force is to coordinate the recovery planning efforts across all departments and agencies involved in the process. This includes identifying and addressing any challenges that arise during the recovery period, ensuring that resources are allocated efficiently, and communicating recovery updates to the community. The Pajaro Recovery Task Force will work closely with the Disaster Recovery Manager to ensure that recovery efforts are in line with the overall goals and objectives identified by the Task Force. Together, they will oversee the entire recovery process and ensure that it is conducted in a timely and effective manner.

The Pajaro Recovery Task Force will consist of County Leadership, the Recovery Manager, key county departments, special districts, state agencies, federal agencies, non-profit organizations, and 10-15 community members at large. The Task Force will have six (6) subcommittees:

- Agricultural and Economic Recovery
- Health and Social Services Recovery
- Housing and Community Development Recovery
- Infrastructure Recovery
- Natural and Cultural Resources Recovery
- Public Safety Recovery

Pajaro Long-Term Recovery Plan

The Pajaro Recovery Task Force will, through a community led planning effort, develop a Pajaro Long-Term Recovery Plan. The purpose of the Long-Term Recovery Plan is to provide a comprehensive framework for recovery operations within the community of Pajaro in the aftermath of the January and March 2023 Winter Storms. The Long-Term Recovery Plan is central to the success of local long-term recovery and resilience and is also paramount for achieving positive short-term recovery outcomes. The Long-Term Recovery Plan enables more efficient and effective recovery by empowering the community to identify appropriate recovery strategies, engage the necessary agencies and partnerships, and apply the necessary resources to the affected areas.

Approval And Implementation

Throughout the planning process the Board of Supervisors will receive regular updates from the Director of Emergency Management and the Disaster Recovery Manager. The County Administrator, in collaboration with the Director of Emergency Management and Disaster Recovery Manager will review the draft recovery strategies. The final Pajaro Recovery Plan will then be presented to the Community of Pajaro and to the Board of Supervisors for Adoption. Once approved, recovery strategies will be implemented by agencies identified as the responsible party.

Assembly Bill 102 - Funding for Pajaro Recovery

The County of Monterey has been granted \$20 Million for Pajaro recovery efforts by the State of California, providing a rare and unique opportunity for the county to strategically invest in the long-term resilience of the community of Pajaro.

“Assembly Bill 102 allocates \$20,000,000 to the County of Monterey for it to administer ins support for flood relief for the community of Pajaro. This amount shall be available for assistance to individuals, households, and the community, including direct relief to all residents and workers, regardless of documentation and citizenship status. Assistance shall be available for purposes including, but not limited to, home inspections, remediation, repairs, and retrofits; rental assistance; vehicle replacement assistance; infrastructure repairs, upgrades, and development; and community outreach.”

With the understanding that there is great community need for financial assistance and a limited amount of money, it is recommended that the Board of Supervisors allocate monies upon adoption of the Pajaro Recovery Plan presented by the Pajaro Recovery Task Force, including recommendations for use of the monies. Monterey County Departments and Non-Profit Organizations interested in requesting the funds may participate in the recovery planning efforts to advocate for initiatives that may be funded with AB 102 monies.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

Monterey County Administrative Office; Monterey County Department of Health.

FINANCING:

The Disaster Recovery Manager (\$140,000) and Recovery Mobile Office Trailer (\$60,000) will be funded through the FY 2023-24 Emergency Operations Center Budget; Expenses are anticipated to cost approximately \$200,000. Department of Emergency Management (DEM) will seek reimbursement through FEMA and/or CalOES Public Assistance Grant opportunities.



BOARD OF SUPERVISORS STRATEGIC INITIATIVES:

Mark a check to the related Board of Supervisors Strategic Initiatives

- Economic Development
- Administration
- Health & Human Services
- Infrastructure
- Public Safety

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Attachments:

- Power Point Presentation (2023 Pajaro Long Term Recovery Plan Task Force)