



County of Monterey Planning Commission

Item No.2

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

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REFERRAL 22.7 - PAJARO RIVER LEVEE IMPROVEMENTS AND PRIORITY COMMUNITY PLAN UPDATES

REFERRAL 22.3 - DEVELOPMENT EVALUATION SYSTEM PROGRESS

- a. Consider receiving an update from the Pajaro River Flood Management Agency regarding repair and improvements to the Pajaro River Levee;
- b. Consider receiving an update from staff regarding the Pajaro Long-Term Recovery Planning and status update 2010 General Plan implementation related to Development Evaluation System, Pajaro, Boronda and Chualar Community Plans development.
- c. Provide direction to staff.

Project Location: North County Inland Area (Pajaro and Boronda); Central Salinas Valley Area (Chualar)

Proposed CEQA action: Statutory Exemption pursuant to Section 15262 of the CEQA.

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Planning Commission:

- a. Receive a status update from the Pajaro River Flood Management Agency regarding repair and improvements to the Pajaro River Levee;
- b. Receive a status update from staff regarding the Pajaro Long-Term Recovery Planning and status update 2010 General Plan implementation related to Development Evaluation System, Pajaro, Boronda and Chualar Community Plans development; and
- c. Provide direction to staff.

SUMMARY/DISCUSSION

This report provides updates regarding Planning Commission Referrals No. 22.7 (Pajaro Levee, Recovery & Priority Community Plans) and No. 22.3 (Development Evaluation System) since the previous quarterly report provided to the Planning Commission on June 26, 2024 (PC File # 24-070).

Pajaro River Levee Repairs and Improvements

Staff received the following updated information from the Pajaro Regional Flood Management Agency (PRFMA) regarding Pajaro River Levee repair and improvements. On the evening of August 27th, 2024, Supervisor Glenn Church and the Monterey County Department of Emergency Management held a Community Preparedness Meeting in the town of Pajaro. The meeting was held primarily in Spanish, with Mixteco and English translation, where needed. Executive Director Strudley attended on behalf of PRFMA, and provided a brief presentation describing the levee project, including the features of protection planned as part of the project as well as an expected timeline for design and

construction. Emphasis was given to Reach 4 which would protect the town of Pajaro. Dr. Strudley also provided an update on the “River Mile 8-10 Levee Rehabilitation Project”, in which PRFMA is introducing free, high-quality levee material to the upper segment of the Monterey County side levee, above the town of Pajaro, and restoring levee crown and side slopes to their original configuration. The partial levee restoration work of the Pajaro River Monterey County River Mile 8 - 10 Levee Project is meant to be an interim solution that is expected to provide a design life of roughly 5 -10 years. In contrast, PRFMA expects the authorized levee reconstruction project with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Pajaro River at Watsonville Project) will afford the adjacent Monterey County floodplain, including the Town of Pajaro, protection against the so called “100 year flood” or 1% Annual Chance Exceedance event. The goal is to complete the River Mile 8-10 Levee Rehabilitation Project by October, ensuring that no part of the levee remains open or vulnerable by November 1st before the rainy season begins. The USACE and PRFMA plan to hold numerous other community meetings as implementation of the project unfolds across the lower Pajaro Valley over the coming years.

Reach 6:

PRFMA is in ownership of two of the three full fee take of the residential and business parcel acquisitions necessary for the Project within Reach 6 and is in final negotiations to purchase the third. Residential relocations at these parcels are expected to be completed by September 15th. Demolition of these buildings awaits a Phase I Environmental Site Assessment results that are required to assess whether potential sources or indications of hazardous materials conditions are present within or adjacent to acquired parcels and whether abatement is required prior to demolition of any site improvements that need to be cleared for the Project. PRFMA staff remain in negotiation with several of the agricultural parcels and are working with owners to relocate wells that fall within the construction footprint of Reach 6. Simultaneously, staff and consultants are working with PG&E to relocate their utilities. USACE has also been engaged with PG&E to ensure the utilities are moved in time for construction. Early construction activities required in advance of earthmoving will begin during in October and include demolition of structures remaining on full fee take parcels, removal and limbing of trees within the construction footprint, and relocation of agricultural wells within the construction footprint. The PRFMA will be conducting these activities under Work-In-Kind agreements with the USACE and constitute the beginning of construction and groundbreaking. Consistent with the original schedule to begin construction in 2024 and with the “early works” described above, a groundbreaking ceremony to be held on October 2, 2024, is being planned to celebrate the implementation of this long-awaited project. Time and Place are still to be announced.

Grants and Strategic Planning Advancements:

PRFMA and Pajaro Community is now the recipient of several significant grant awards that will allow important multi-benefit flood risk reduction and infrastructure that will move forward throughout the lower Pajaro Valley:

- PRFMA is part of a multi-agency award from the California Department of Conservation’s Round 2 Multi-benefit Land Repurposing Program, which will provide approximately \$941,000 in planning funds to address portions of the Pajaro River levee system in Reach 4 (upstream of the confluence with Salsipuedes Creek) on the Santa Cruz County side of the

river system, which is not part of the improvements associated with the USACE Pajaro River at Watsonville Project.

- PRFMA was just awarded \$200,000 from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the California Office of Emergency Services (CalOES) Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) to develop an Agency Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (LHMP). A LHMP will allow the PRFMA to independently apply for hazard mitigation and infrastructure funding from FEMA from various sources, including HMGP, BRIC (Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities) Program, and others. Additionally, a LHMP will allow PRFMA to further clarify and identify flood risk reduction priorities that are consistent with community needs.
- On July 9, 2024, the Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments (AMBAG), in partnership with the PRFMA, was awarded \$2,250,000 in Sustainable Transportation Planning Grant funds to pursue the planning phase of the Pajaro Bridge Infrastructure Resilient Design Study (Pajaro BIRDS). Pajaro BIRDS aims to revise the Highway 1 crossing over the Pajaro River to enhance transportation safety and sustainability and to connect the flood risk reduction improvements upstream and downstream implemented more adequately by the USACE Pajaro River at Watsonville Project and the PRFMA Pajaro Bridge to Bay Project.
- On May 14, 2024, CalOES and FEMA notified Santa Cruz County Flood Control and Water Conservation District - Zone 7, on behalf of the PRFMA, of \$300,000 in BRIC (Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities) Program funding to pursue initial planning phase work on the Pajaro River Bridge to Bay Project. The grant application was made prior to the creation of the PRFMA by Zone 7, and the PRFMA cannot act as the subrecipient in advance of completing an agency LHMP. As such, Zone 7 will remain the subrecipient, but all project work and commitments, including the local match requirement of \$120,000, will be made by the PRFMA. The grant award will support planning phase work to reduce flood risk in the “Reach 1” segment of the Pajaro River in both Monterey and Santa Cruz Counties, which extends from the Highway 1 bridge down to the ocean.

PRFMA will begin work on these projects and grant programs this fiscal year, in an effort to build out flood risk reduction solutions in the lower Pajaro Valley that have been needed for decades.

Additionally, the House Appropriations Committee met July 9th, 2024, to consider the FY25 Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act. The measure was approved by the Committee and included funding through the EPA STAG-Clean Water State Revolving Fund in the amount of \$1,105,800 for the Pajaro County Sanitation District Sewer System Improvement Project. There are several additional steps before the funding will be approved and awarded. The funding will be to replace and repair sanitary system sewer pipes in the Pajaro County Sanitation District (PCSD). The County has been repairing and replacing manholes and pump stations, but funding is needed to make repairs to the sewer pipes.

Pajaro Long-Term Recovery Planning

The County, working through the Department of Emergency Management (DEM), continues a Pajaro Long-Term Recovery Planning effort to support the community’s needs and vision for a resilient and

sustainable recovery. HCD staff continues to participate in the recovery planning Pajaro Revitalization Committee meetings as needed. The Pajaro Revitalization Committee brings together a broad coalition of resident leaders, organizations, and agencies to take a collaborative approach critical to developing a comprehensive and effective recovery plan.

As of August 30, 2024, Pajaro residents and business owners who have applied continue to be eligible for ongoing direct assistance to help replace groceries that were lost in the floods, household assistance to cover home repairs, vehicle repairs, and replacing personal property damaged in the flood, such as furniture. Business owners are eligible to receive funding to cover business related equipment losses and building repairs. Since these monies will reimburse residents for losses, some amount of documentation on losses, monies received from insurance, and benefits from other government relief programs it is necessary to ensure that appropriate amounts of money are getting into the hands of Pajaro flood survivors as effectively and efficiently as possible. Active ongoing engagement with caseworkers from Community Bridges and Catholic Charities is underway to inform the public of the available funds and to provide assistance navigating the application process. The Department of Emergency Management has established a Pajaro Recovery webpage that provides residents key information on steps to take to apply for funding and the steps for tracking the status of a submitted application accessible at <https://www.readymontereycounty.org/recover/pajaro-recovery>.

The Pajaro Recovery webpage also offers a list of projects funded part of the Pajaro long-term recovery plan as approved by the Board of Supervisors on December 6th, 2023 (Board File # RES 23-212). The projects on the webpage list the funding allocated to each project and designates one of the following statuses: In Progress, Under Development, Pipeline or Uninitiated. The Pajaro Recovery webpage and general County of Monterey Emergency Readiness, Response, and Recovery can be found at readymontereycounty.org and is offered in both English and Spanish.

2010 County General Plan - Planning Priorities

The 2010 Monterey County General Plan designates Community Areas to be actively supported as the County's primary planning priorities, with developing Community Plans for Pajaro and Chualar as the highest priorities (LU-2.23).

Chualar Community Planning: In spring 2023, with input from the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors, the Housing and Community Development Department (HCD) established its Five-Year Long-Range Planning Work Program (LRP Work Program) established planned priority activities Fiscal Years 2024-2025 to 2027-2028. The LRP Work Program anticipated HCD will commence the Chualar Community Plan effort in this current fiscal year (FY24-25) and the Board of Supervisors approved a budget augmentation of \$50,000 for this effort.

Staff advertised Request for Proposals #10925, has selected a consultant to support the development of the Chualar Community Plan and is actively working to finalize a Professional Services Agreement (PSA). The PSA will be considered by the Board of Supervisors in fall 2024. Commencement of the Chualar Community Plan process is estimated to begin once the PSA is in place with the consultant. The Chualar community planning process requires that staff work toward fostering deeper community engagement and recognize that the Chualar school district has a great presence in Chualar. Their partnership and expertise are invaluable to the County, and staff believe their participation will

significantly enhance our collective efforts. Staff has started to work with school district on preliminary outreach opportunities for Chualar. School district staff attended as community partner to the Community Engagement Training sessions on June 11th and June 28th, 2024, hosted by the Monterey County Health Department. These sessions were designed to equip staff with practical tools and strategies for engaging with our diverse community more effectively. During these training sessions staff and school district staff collaborated in developing community engagement strategies to that will be implemented as a part of the Chualar Community Plan process. More recently, on August 29th, staff attended a Cafecito community meeting in Chualar. These monthly meetings, hosted by Supervisor Chris Lopez, provide an opportunity for the community members in Chualar to engage with the supervisor and learn about upcoming projects in the community. The goal was for staff to inform the community about the pending community planning process and gather initial feedback to guide the planning process.

Pajaro Community Planning: The LRP Work Program anticipates HCD staff will commence the Pajaro Community Plan effort in the next fiscal year (FY25-26), pending completion of the Long-Term Recovery Plan, completion of other key General/Community Plan updates in process, and community readiness. No new developments have occurred for this project since the last status update on June 26th, 2024.

Boronda Community Planning: The LRP Work Program anticipates HCD will commence the Boronda Community Plan effort in the next fiscal year (FY26 -27). No new developments have occurred for this project since the last status update on June 26th, 2024.

Development Evaluation System (DES): DES is identified as a board policy priority task in the LRP work program that is not currently assigned or active but is a priority task pending assignment during this current fiscal year FY24-25. Staff does not have an anticipated assignment and start date, at this time. No new developments have occurred for this project since the last status update on June 26th, 2024.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

This presentation is Statutorily Exempt pursuant to Section 15262 of the CEQA Guidelines as an early discussion of possible future actions that do not involve a commitment to a project. The Pajaro Long-Term Recovery Plan, Pajaro Community Plan, Chualar Community Plan, and Boronda Community Plan will each require a CEQA determination prior to adoption.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT

Multiple County departments are involved in the long-term recovery planning efforts in Pajaro: Department of Emergency Management is leading these efforts; Health Department's Environmental Health Bureau and its Planning, Evaluation and Policy Unit; Civil Rights Office; County Administrative Office's Sustainability Program and Office of Community Engagement and Strategic Advocacy; and the Public Works, Facilities and Parks Department.

PRFMA is a joint powers authority which includes membership by the County of Monterey and the Monterey County Water Resources Agency. PRFMA was formed in 2021 to plan, finance and implement projects and programs to reduce flood risk from the lower Pajaro River and its tributaries in

Santa Cruz and Monterey Counties.

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cc: Monterey County Department of Emergency Management, Monterey County Environmental Health Bureau, Monterey County Civil Rights Office, Pajaro Regional Flood Management Agency, Monterey County Water Resources Agency, US Army Corps of Engineers, Monterey County District 3, Monterey County District 2