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## Orinda sinkhole repair clears high hurdle, work to begin this week

By Sora O'Doherty

For the first time, the Orinda City council used an exception to the Brown Act to add an urgent item to its agenda that came to light in order to quickly begin repairs on the Miner Road sinkhole: permits.

The item came to the council's attention after the agenda notice had been given to the public.

Having provided the Army Corps of Engineers with additional justification of the continued state of emergency caused by the sinkhole, Orinda was deemed qualified for renewal of emergency permits. The Corps was convinced by the narrow nature of the roads being used as detours around Miner Road, as well as the continuing storms.

Once the permits are issued, Orinda must begin the repairs within seven days. That clock started when the permits were issued on April 13, according to Jason Chen, Orinda's senior civil engineer.

Although welcome, this also presents a potential problem for Orinda: it may have to start the work before qualifying for federal reimbursement, which, in theory, could jeopardize the possibility of qualifying for reimbursement of the money they will spend.

Director of Public Works and Engineering Services Larry Theis updated the council and the public on the current state of sinkhole repair plans. Further compromises have been reached concerning the design of the culvert for Miner Road. In order to provide a better design for passage of fish through the culvert, the city agreed to add another six inches of depth to the culvert, which will be buried in the channel bottom, with the addition of a concrete "curb" on the culvert that fish will be able to navigate.

Further complications may be caused by EBMUD regarding the waterline that passes through the sinkhole work site. The latest hydraulic study agreed with the box culvert design and found that the overflow pipes are not necessary. This probably means that those pipes will be regarded as a "betterment" - intentional city improvements - and therefore they may be ineligible for federal reimbursement. Other elements of the repairs may also be considered betterments.

The actions taken by the city council on April 10 included adoption of a resolution extending the state of emergency, approval of the latest plans for the repair, and authorizing staff to negotiate a revised contract with Bay Cities for the construction work. The cost of the renegotiated construction contract is now estimated to be \$2.2 million, with another half million dollars for emergency work, bringing the total to \$2.7 million. The city now hopes that the repairs will be completed and the road reopened by the end of June.

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