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Rheem Boulevard to be Closed for 4 to 6 Months

By Sophie Braccini



Image provided

and a cost the town could not cover alone. The joint repair of the road by the developer and the town was one of the conditions of the approval of the Rancho Laguna II project by Summerhill Homes. Now the developer is ready to start repairing the road, before grading for the homes begins.

On March 11, the Town Council was informed of the upcoming project between Fay Hill Reservoir Road and Fernwood Drive.

The project is a joint venture between the town and the developer. Each party's responsibility is defined in the conditions of approval. Summerhill is responsible for providing detailed plans for management of the closure. Plans include logistics of access, signage and traffic management of both construction and other traffic affected by the project. These plans have been submitted and routed for review to agencies and departments including the Moraga-Orinda Fire District, the Moraga Police Department, and will be sent to the local school districts and Saint Mary's College. Lafayette residents driving to Campolindo High School using Rheem Boulevard as a route will be heavily impacted.

There are still some serious uncertainties regarding this project. The first is the start date, since Summerhill still needs to obtain permits from different agencies. Kevin Ibrahim, Summerhill vice president of development, stated, "We are currently working with town staff to finalize the details of the construction drawings for the Rheem Boulevard repairs. We hope to have the plans completed and approved within the next month or two. After the approvals we will start the Rheem Boulevard reconstruction. Currently, the work is anticipated to start in May."

The second uncertainty is geological and could impact the length of the closure. "The slide repair is expected to take four to six months, (unless there are) unforeseen circumstances, in which case if there are issues, construction could span over two grading seasons," said Laurie Sucgang, senior town engineer. She reiterated that the actual duration would depend on the conditions of the slides, which are revealed during construction. The contractor will remove the asphalt and excavate up to 30 feet under the existing roadway. If necessary the contractor will remove excess water in areas that are too wet for reconstruction.

Notice will be sent to all neighbors and signage will be posted 30 days prior to the closure at the intersections of Rheem Boulevard at St. Mary's Road and Moraga Road. Summerhill also will provide a detour plan to affected agencies, and detour signage on the roads.

The terrible condition of the portion of Rheem Boulevard between St. Mary's Road and Moraga Road will eventually become a bad memory. But to fix that portion of the road, the arterial will be completely closed for at least four to six months, and maybe longer depending on the condition of the terrain underneath. According to both Summerhill Homes, which will be in charge of the construction, and Moraga Public Works staff, the work should start this spring or summer.

That leg of Rheem Boulevard provides a strange driving experience. Either ends are in good shape and have been redone by the town a few years back, but the middle is badly eroded with potholes, bordering on complete collapse. The reason of this sorry state is the landslides that affect the hillside and the terrain under the road. Repairing means major excavation, grading and fill,

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