April 27, 2020

Hello Save South Boulder friends and supporters,

We trust this email finds you well, healthy, and enjoying the weekend. Please feel free to share this information with your friends and neighbors and invite them to stay informed by sending an email to savesobonow@gmail.com or sign up on the website [www.savesouthboulder.com](http://www.savesouthboulder.com/%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank).

The purpose of this email is to update you on what happened at the Water Resources Advisory Board (WRAB) last Monday, April 20th and alert you to two other critically important advisory board meetings coming up in May.

First, a huge shout out to the 60 or so people who sent emails prior to the meeting urging WRAB to recommend that City Council moves forward with flood mitigation for a 500-year flood. Gordon McCurry, a professional hydrologist, and WRAB member told us that WRAB doesn’t typically receive this much public input and it was much appreciated. Your emails are now part of the public record and available to other decision-makers involved in the process.

Second, we want to thank those of you who spoke up for the 500-year option during the Zoom meeting. It was a long night, yet important for WRAB and city staff to know we are deeply concerned about flood mitigation and the future of the South Boulder Creek flood plain, and we are not going away or giving up. Of the 14 people who spoke all but two were in favor of the 500-year option.

Unfortunately, and despite the excellent reasoning and line of questioning by McCurry, who has more technical expertise than any of the other WRAB members, the final vote was 3-2 in favor of the 100-year option, which provides the least protection.

How they voted:

Kirk Vincent                        yes

Trisha Oeth                         yes

Ted Rose                             yes

Gordon McCurry                no

John Berggeren                  no

It is important to note that WRAB’s recommendation is not binding and City Council is free to reject it.

Arguments in support of the 100-year option included:

      CU rejected the 500-year option; therefore the WRAB must do the same.

      We have to act now regardless of other compelling factors.

      All flood mitigation projects must be treated equally, regardless of other factors, such as how many people and structures could be protected.

We assert that these arguments are flawed and pale in comparison to the benefits that would be afforded by a flood mitigation project designed for a 500-year flood.

Arguments in favor of the 500-year option from our previous email:

      Public Health and Safety:  Project design for the 500-year event offers the most protection because of that design will detain more floodwater. Given the reality of climate change, we should plan for the future. Scientists project that we will see more frequent intense storms, which will mean more frequent flooding events. And it’s possible, if not likely, that what we currently call a 100-year flood will actually be a 60-year flood event in the not too distant future.

      More for our Money:  The cost differential between the 100-year flood design and the 500-year design is minimal – only about $6 million for a project that may cost $41 to $46 million for flood mitigation. Note: Cost estimates at this point have a wide the margin of error. Further, the current estimates provided by the City are inflated by including within the cost of flood mitigation several demands by CU for the City to pay for filling in the quarry pit and remedying what CU calls negative “impacts to its property.”

      Inflated Costs:  CU is asking the City to pay tens of millions of dollars to put as much as 1.3 million cubic feet of dirt removed by the gravel mining company back in the gravel mine’s pit so the University can build there. In addition, CU is demanding that the City pay to move CU’s tennis courts, which were built over the objections of Boulder County and the City of Boulder; tear down and rebuild the storage building on the NE side of the property; move and re-engineer South Loop Road, and pay for any damages to CU’s property caused by the construction of the flood mitigation project.

Acceding to CU’s demands will cost the City tens of millions of dollars with ABSOLUTELY NO BENEFIT TO BOULDER RESIDENTS WHATSOEVER. And we believe that the gravel pit should be used for water detention during a flood. For gosh sakes!  We already have a huge hole in the ground. Let’s use it.

      Data-Free Decision-Mak**i**ng:  The staff summary of possible environmental impacts underestimate negative impacts to wetlands.  Given that only one data-gathering project has been initiated and may not be completed in time to inform decision-making, insufficient evidence exists to justify stating that minimal negative impacts will occur if wetlands are destroyed on OSMP lands and a State Designated Area in order to build a floodwall and dam.

In addition, despite City staff incorrectly assuming that the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) would allow building the dam and floodwall within its right-of-way along US 36, staff are now assuming that the CDOT will allow the city to build a connecting dam in its right-of-way between the proposed flood wall and the US 36 embankment near South Boulder Creek.  This contradicts CDOT’s written statement that it will allow no above-ground flood control structures to be built in its right-of-way. Staff also posits that CDOT will only support the 100-year option because of the 200- and 500-year flood designs will force higher water flows through the US 36 underpass.  However, CDOT’s prior written statement expressed no opinion about the flood size issue.

**MARK YOUR CALENDARS**

**Upcoming Decision Points**

Remember that City Council wants to select a flood mitigation option in June without assurance that it will be approved by CDOT.  It wants to complete annexation in August without a site plan from CU or any hard data to indicate whether development is appropriate or even possible in the floodplain and the buffer to the west.

April 27 – May 1:  City’s “Online Forum” where the public can ask questions and staff will post answers on the city website

May 7: Planning Board meeting to hear Staff presentations on annexation issues and flood mitigation designs.

May 13: Open Space Board of Trustees meeting: Staff report on the need to use open space land for flood mitigation infrastructure

May 20: Zoom Informational Webinar To the Public on flood mitigation decisions

June 3: OSBT a public hearing on flood mitigation and recommendation to Council regarding disposal of open space land for flood mitigation

June 16 – City Council decision on flood mitigation options

As always, please feel free to contact us with questions, concerns, and ideas.

Harlin Savage and Marki LeCompte

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