

Capitola City Council

Agenda Report

Meeting: January 11, 2024

From: Public Works Department

Subject: December 2023 Winter Storm Event



Recommended Action: Receive an update regarding the December 2023 Winter Storm Event.

Background: On December 28, 2023, the City experienced an impactful high wave event, resulting in storm surges that over-topped the seawall, affecting the village and low-lying areas along Soquel Creek. In response to the anticipated weather conditions, the Police Department issued an evacuation warning for low-lying areas the night before the event. Public Works crews, along with the Building Official, were actively involved in monitoring, response, and assessment during and after the event.

Public Works crews worked diligently to manage water levels in the Village, clear debris from the Esplanade, and construct a sand berm at the seawall. Simultaneously, the Building Official conducted inspections of affected buildings to assess damage.

Following the initial wave event, the Village remained closed to vehicular traffic for approximately 48 hours to allow for clean up, and as another wave event was forecasted for December 30. Fortunately, the subsequent waves were less severe, and the Village was spared from further significant impacts.

Discussion: The damages from the high wave event include four yellow tags (indicating minimal damage with no occupancy restrictions) issued for three commercial units and one residential unit. Additionally, two red tags (indicating more substantial damage with occupancy restrictions) were issued for residential units at the Venetian. Presently, two yellow tags have been resolved, leaving two outstanding yellow tags and two red tags.

City property damages include broken pilings, damaged structural elements, and the loss of decking on the Wharf, along with the complete loss of the lower Hoopers stairs. Preliminary assessments from engineers estimate a repair timeframe of six to eight weeks for the Wharf. Repairs to the Wharf can be integrated into the existing contract with the Wharf contractor.

To address the damage to the lower Hoopers stairs, staff is considering proposing a "betterment" project, suggesting the reconstruction of the lower section using more resilient materials, specifically concrete. This potential enhancement aims to increase the stairs' durability, given their history of recurrent damage. This potential project can be considered later this winter during the annual goal-setting process.

Fiscal Impact: The fiscal impact of the high wave event primarily revolves around the estimated costs of repairing City property damages. Preliminary assessments suggest a ballpark figure of less than \$250,000 for the Wharf repairs, which can be covered within the existing budget by integrating the repairs into the current contract with the Wharf contractor.

The potential "betterment" project for the lower Hoopers stairs would involve additional costs, though the project may be eligible for grant funding. Staff will provide further details on options to improve Hoopers stairs during the goal-setting meeting.

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