

Gautho, Julia

From: Leslie Nielsen <lpbeach21@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, April 22, 2026 2:43 PM
To: City Council; Gautho, Julia
Subject: City Council Item 7B comment

Mayor and Council,

I respectfully ask that you pull Item 7B – Esplanade Park Coastal Access Enhancement and Adaptation Plan from the April 23rd, City Council Consent agenda, and **defer action** until after the full budget discussion, and a transparent presentation of CIP priorities and long-term funding strategy have been reviewed and approved, and you have comprehended the project in the context of a continuous shoreline profile.

Adopting this resolution tonight is premature—not just from a process standpoint, but from a **financial policy standpoint**, particularly given the City’s growing reliance on Measure Y revenue.

The proposed resolution requires the City to:

- Accept the grant,
- Certify that it has sufficient funds to complete the project, and
- Commit to covering any additional costs beyond the grant amount

Yet at the same time, your own proposed budget makes it clear that:

- The General Fund balance is projected to be well below the City’s minimum target
- The city is facing a structural imbalance within the next few years
- And Measure Y revenue is already being used to maintain current service levels

Why is the City committing to new projects—however well-intentioned—before clearly demonstrating how those commitments fit within a structurally constrained budget?

Even though this is a planning grant, the work program leads directly to:

- A preferred alternative
- Cost estimates
- And a phased implementation strategy

That means this decision is not neutral—it is setting up future capital expectations and potential financial obligations, likely to be funded—at least in part—by the same limited revenue sources we are already relying on, including Measure Y.

And yet, the **Capital Improvement Program priorities have not been presented publicly**, and the **budget itself has not been fully vetted by Council or the community**.

This creates a disconnect between project advancement, and fiscal reality and prioritization.

At a minimum, before approving this resolution, the Council should clearly articulate:

- How projects like this will be funded long-term
- Whether Measure Y is being relied upon for future implementation

- And how this project ranks against other unfunded capital needs

It appears the City is making forward commitments **before resolving its underlying structural financial challenges**, and without any public or council input as a consent agenda item.

I also want to raise a critical concern about the **lack of continuity between the Cliff Drive Resiliency Project and the Esplanade Park Adaptation Plan—specifically the unaddressed segment around Hooper’s Beach and the Wharf.**

From a coastal engineering perspective, this is not just a design issue—it is a **Coastal Act compliance issue.**

The Coastal Commission consistently requires that shoreline projects be evaluated based on their **site-specific AND cumulative impacts**, particularly under:

- **Coastal Act Section 30235** – which allows shoreline armoring only when it is necessary to protect existing structures **and does not cause or contribute to erosion or adverse impacts to adjacent areas**
- **Section 30253** – which requires that new development minimize risks from hazards like erosion and sea level rise, and **avoid creating or exacerbating hazards on neighboring properties**

Designing adaptation measures on **either side of a gap**—without analyzing the intervening shoreline—raises a clear risk of:

- **Flanking erosion at the project boundaries**
- **Transfer of wave energy into unprotected segments**
- **Increased risk to adjacent assets like the Wharf and existing revetments**

This is exactly the type of “**piecemealing**” the Coastal Commission routinely pushes back on.

And importantly, the grant-funded work program explicitly includes:

- Coastal hazard modeling
- Evaluation of structural and nature-based alternatives
- Development of a preferred design strategy

But for that analysis to be legally and technically defensible under the Coastal Act, it must be based on a **continuous coastal profile**, not segmented project boundaries.

Without integrating the Hooper’s Beach / Wharf segment into the analysis, it will be very difficult for the city to demonstrate compliance with these standards during Coastal Development Permit review.

You cannot responsibly design a shoreline solution to the west, and another to the east while effectively **skipping the middle section**, which is likely to become the point of failure.

Before advancing design concepts or selecting a preferred alternative, the city should demonstrate:

- A **continuous coastal engineering profile** from Cliff Drive through Esplanade Park
- Integrated modeling of **wave dynamics and shoreline response across the entire reach**, including Hooper’s Beach and the Wharf
- And a clear understanding of how each project interacts with adjacent shoreline segments

Without that integrated analysis, there is a real risk that we are designing solutions in isolation that could **conflict with one another—or worse, transfer risk directly into the gap area** where no solution is currently being proposed.

It would be irresponsible to push an item this important through a consent item resolution.

Best regards,

Leslie Nielsen