

SAN FRANCISCO BAY CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

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TO: Design Review Board Members

FROM: Lawrence J. Goldzband, Executive Director (415/352-3653; lgoldzband@bcdc.ca.gov)
Ellen Miramontes, Bay Design Analyst (415/352-3643; ellenm@bcdc.ca.gov)

SUBJECT: Draft Minutes of December 10, 2012 BCDC Design Review Board Meeting

1. **Call to Order and Attendance.** The Design Review Board's Chair, John Kriken, called the meeting to order at approximately 6:20 p.m. Other Design Review Board members in attendance included Karen Alschuler, Ephraim Hirsch, Tom Leader, Jacinta McCann, Stefan Pellegrini and Gary Strang. BCDC staff in attendance included Brad McCrea, Bob Batha, Jaime Michaels, Tim Eichenberg and Ellen Miramontes.

2. **Welcome and Orientation for New Design Review Board Members.** The Design Review Board members received an orientation and training regarding the Commission and, in particular, their role as Board members. The Commission's Regulatory Program Director, Chief of Permits, Chief Counsel and Bay Design Analyst all presented information for the orientation.

a. **Staff Presentations.** Following is a brief synopsis of the information presented:

(1) Ellen Miramontes, Bay Design Analyst, provided an outline of what would be covered and briefly described the purpose and role of the Design Review Board.

(2) Bob Batha, Chief of Permits, discussed the following topics: a brief history on the formation of the Commission; the McAteer-Petris Act; the major focuses of the Commission; the Commission's main jurisdictions; and the role of staff members and Board members.

(3) Brad McCrea, Regulatory Program Director, briefly introduced and guided the Board through the San Francisco Bay Plan with a focus on policies in these sections: Climate Change; Protection of the Shoreline; Recreation; Public Access; Appearance, Design, and Scenic Views.

(4) Ms. Miramontes provided a brief overview on what occurs prior, during and following the DRB process. She also guided the Board through the public access objectives outlined in "Shoreline Spaces: Public Access Design Guidelines for the San Francisco Bay."

(5) Tim Eichenberg, Chief Counsel, provided a brief overview of legal issues pertaining to Design Review Board Members including conflicts of interest, gifts and honoraria, post-commission activities, ex parte communications, the Bagley-Keene Open Meeting Act, and the Public Records Act.

3. **Bon Air Bridge Replacement Project. (First Pre-Application Review).** The Board next reviewed the City of Larkspur's proposal to replace the Bon Air Bridge located in the City of Larkspur, Marin County. The replacement project is necessary to address structural issues at the existing bridge.

a. **Staff Presentation.** Jaime Michaels introduced the project and the issues identified in the staff report.



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b. **Project Presentation.** Hamid Shamsapour, Larkspur's Public Works Director and City Engineer, introduced the project and described the need for the bridge replacement. Bob Cermak, a Project Manager with Parsons Brinckerhoff, described the project and the surrounding context in greater detail. Leslie Allen, an environmental consultant, described the environmental review process that had taken place, noted six key biological species in the project vicinity, the proposed mitigation and public access compatibility with wildlife and how the project had responded to compatibility concerns. Don MacDonald, with MacDonald Architects, described the community process that had directed the design of the bridge to be low in profile, incorporate a railing design that would echo the wetlands in the area and include lights that are currently used throughout the city. Mr. Cermak then discussed sea level rise projections in the area and relayed comments made by the Commission's Engineering Criteria Review Board regarding geotechnical aspects of the design and the use of seismic instrumentation.

c. **Reviewer Questions.** The Board members asked the following questions:

(1) Ms. McCann asked what the design life of the bridge was projected to be. Mr. Cermak stated that the design life was 75 years.

(2) Mr. Hirsch inquired how the proposed width would compare to the existing. The existing width is 44 feet wide and the proposed width would be 62 feet wide. He wanted to know whether the new portion would be considered Bay fill to which the staff responded affirmatively. He also asked whether pile driving would occur. Mr. Cermak stated that there would be some pile driving performed for the temporary piles and that the permanent piles would be drilled. He also asked about the use of the acorn style lights and whether any light would be directed upwards into the sky. It was stated that the light would be directed downward only by installing a shield within the light fixture.

(3) Mr. Kriken asked about the current boating use of the waterway. Mr. Cermak stated that there was no commercial locating use of the creek, only recreational use. He further described that the Marin Rowing Association is located downstream and most of these boaters only go up to the bridge although some single sculls and kayakers do occasionally go past the bridge further upstream. He also explained that occasionally some motorboats go upstream of the bridge in order to perform maintenance work along the creek. Mr. Kriken stated that it would be helpful to show sections depicting the clearance beneath the bridge for boaters at high tide. Mr. Cermak stated that the same clearance that exists would be maintained with the proposed design. Mr. Kriken stated that it is important to consider the recreational opportunities on the creek waters.

(4) Mr. Hirsch asked why the bridge needed to project so far beyond the railing on either side of the bridge. It was explained that this extra width only occurred at the pile caps and Mr. Hirsch stated that he did not see the need for this extra projection to occur.

(5) Mr. Leader asked whether the two bike lanes on either side were an essential part of the project. Mr. Cermak explained that the two bike lanes would allow for bicycle circulation to occur easily in both directions and it was projected that these lanes would be used quite a bit.

(6) Mr. Kriken stated that he would like to know more specific information about the adjacent trail widths. He also mentioned that he would like to explore the landmark question further. Mr. Cermak explained that the consistent message they had received at public meetings throughout the design process was that the community did not want a landmark structure that would be highly visible from a distance. Mr. MacDonald further explained that the community wanted the bridge to appear as a "line on the horizon."

(7) Ms. McCann noted that in looking at the existing bridge versus the proposed bridge, she had concerns regarding transparency and she was interested in maximizing visibility through the railing. Mr. MacDonald stated that the proposed railing would be much more open than the existing. Ms. McCann observed that the proposed design appeared fairly dense.

(8) Mr. Kriken asked whether the light spacing (approximately 86 feet) would be sufficient to provide the ability for facial recognition. The applicants stated they would need to explore this question further.

(9) Mr. Strang asked about the difference in the depth of the bridge height. Mr. Cermak explained that a very similar profile of the bridge would be maintained while only the railings and barriers would vary. Mr. MacDonald explained that while a 3'-6" railing height is required, they had chosen to provide a 4'-6" railing height due to the presence of bikes on the bridge.

d. **Public Comment.** There were no public comments.

e. **Board Discussion**

(1) Mr. Hirsch read a description of a reinforced concrete bridge from a 1949 Museum of Modern Art book which stated the following: "This rigid frame of reinforced concrete apes no historical precedent. Its vulgar ornament is peculiar to our times and easy of achievement in this docile material." He also read a definition of "kitsch" described as superfluous art produced for no purpose other than to entertain. He further summarized that he does not believe that the design of the underneath bridge structure works with the design on the top of the bridge structure. He believes that the concrete abutments at both ends and the light fixtures should be rethought.

(2) Ms. McCann stated her concern regarding transparency of the railings as one moves across the bridge. She further noted that the existing railings are very simple that the proposed railings seemed "a bit elaborate."

(3) Mr. Leader noted that the wavy top of the railing would be very distracting as one passes over the bridge and that the top could be designed to be much simpler.

(4) Mr. Pellegrini observed that the sidewalks were being widened by only one foot and that the bike lane width of 6 feet was adequate although not comfortable. He therefore surmised that it might be workable for the pedestrians and bicyclists to share the same space. He also noted that providing a place to stop in the middle might help to provide a landmark quality to the bridge.

(5) Ms. Alschuler stated she believes the separated spaces for pedestrians and bicyclists provide a greater level of comfort for the users. She further commented that she does not believe that the natural environment needs to be replicated on the bridge railings.

(6) Mr. Kriken observed that various lane widths for cars, bicyclists and pedestrians should be explored.

(7) Mr. Strang stated that the 12-foot vehicle lane width along with the 5-foot shoulder width should be further studied to determine if these widths are really needed.

f. **Board Summary and Conclusions.** The Board concluded its review with the following comments:

(1) **Impacts on Water Access.** The Board expressed concern that adequate clearance be maintained beneath the bridge over time with sea level rise in order to preserve recreational boating access upstream of the bridge. They asked the project sponsor to provide sections depicting the clearance beneath the bridge at high tide under current conditions and also sections depicting clearance with projected sea level rise.

(2) **Lighting.** The Board would like more information on lighting that could include a photometric study. They would like to be assured that public safety (facial recognition) and wildlife compatibility (impacts on wetland species) would be achieved by the lighting design. They encouraged the project sponsor to explore other means of lighting the bridge beyond just the use of the acorn lights proposed at 86-feet-on-center.

(3) **Bridge Width.** The Board would like justification for the various lane widths proposed. They would also like the project sponsor to determine whether the portion of the bridge extending outside of the railings is needed. They further asked that the feasibility of belvederes be explored.

(4) **Railing Transparency and Height.** The Board asked for more information on how views for drivers, pedestrians and bicyclists would be impacted by the proposed railing design. The Board wanted confirmation on whether a 4'-6" railing height was necessary for the outside railing and also what height the barrier between the cars and bikes would be. They suggested that other viable railing alternatives be explored, which would exhibit greater simplicity in design.

(5) **Bicycle and Pedestrian Connections.** The Board wanted to understand how the proposed sidewalks and bike lanes would connect to existing pedestrian and bicycle facilities on either side of the bridge. This information could be shared through the use of enlarged plan views on either end of the bridge.

(6) **Applicant Response.** Mr. Shamsapour made several comments in response to the Board's discussion and conclusions. He stated that the proposed bridge design is what the community, including the Marin County Bicycle Coalition, has advocated for. He specifically shared that the community wants pedestrians and bicycles to be separated. He further added that the community does not want any rest spots or belvederes on the bridge where people may be encouraged to smoke and hang out. He expressed concern that many of the Board's suggestions appeared to be in direct conflict with what the community wants.

4. **Adjournment.** Mr. Kriken adjourned the meeting at approximately 9:10 p.m.