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Moraga votes to reject exorbitant storm drain bids

By Vera Kochan

The 2019 Storm Drain Master Plan Addendum set the wheels in motion for the 2021-23 Annual Storm Drain Repairs Project budgeted at \$1.7 million through the Capital Improvement Project. The town hired Basis of Design consultants to inspect all of the Corrugated Metal Pipes and storm drainpipes/culverts belonging to Moraga. In November 2022, the town council accepted BOD's reports and recommended the replacement or repair of 22 priority storm drainpipe segments.

According to an Aug. 23 staff report by Public Works Director/Town Engineer Shawn Knapp and Associate Civil Engineer Edrienne Aguilar, "On July 11, 2023, construction documents were advertised for bidding. Construction documents show the rehabilitation of nine segments for the base bid and two bid alternatives, prioritized based on current budget limitations and degree of risk failure."

Only two bids were received despite the advertising and were publicly opened on Aug. 3. The Engineer's Estimate for the project was \$771,000. However, both of the incoming bids exceeded that amount by substantial sums. Paulson and Cox Construction, Inc. (Concord) submitted a base bid of \$1,830,260, while the second bid from Kerex Engineering, Inc. (Pleasant Hill) came in considerably lower, but not low enough at \$888,500.

Given the vast differences between bids, staff is led to believe that the bidders might have misinterpreted the scope of the endeavor. The town's description of the project stated, "The work to be performed under this contract includes, but is not limited to: mobilization; demobilization; traffic control and construction signage; installation of water pollution controls; storm drain pipe cleaning and inspection, storm drain pipe replacement and rehabilitation using Cured-in-Place-Pipe (CIPP) lining and open-cut method, surface improvement replacement as a result of the open-cut storm drain replacement; and all other work as shown on the Plans and as described in the Caltrans Standard Specifications and these Technical Provisions to provide a complete project."

"The town went through an analysis of inspecting 30,000 linear feet of storm drain pipe and came up with a priority list of the pipes, and we're trying to get that project out before the wintertime," explained Knapp during the Aug. 23 Town Council Meeting. "It was a short window, and we put it out to bid trying to make sure that we had everything tight in our plans and specs. Unfortunately, because it was at the end of the construction cycle most companies already have their projects and could not do that in the short time frame, and we didn't have a very large - well, two bidders on the project, and so we're going to take it and look at the budget, repackage it and get it out in a spring time frame of work."

Vice Mayor Teresa Onoda asked, "Is there urgency with the corrugated pipes that we have right now, that you know about?"

Knapp replied, "I think we're in fairly good condition right now, and we'll be addressing it next year."

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