COUNTY of MARIPOSA
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LYLE TURPIN
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BOB PICKARD

DISTRICT I
DISTRICT III
DISTRICT II
DISTRICT IV
DISTRICT V

MARIPOSA COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

MINUTE ORDER

TO: MIKE COFFIELD, Interim County Administrative Officer
    TOM GUARINO, County Counsel

FROM: MARGIE WILLIAMS, Clerk of the Board

SUBJECT: Discussion and possible further action regarding continuation of the Local
         Emergency due to landslides on Highway 140 enroute to Yosemite National Park

RESOLUTION 06-215 and 06-216

THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OF MARIPOSA COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

ADOPTED THIS Order on June 2, 2006

ACTION AND VOTE:

Discussion and Possible Further Action Regarding Continuation of the Local Emergency Due to Landslides
on Highway 140 Enroute to Yosemite National Park (County Counsel/Interim County Administrative
Officer)

BOARD ACTION: Chairman Stetson introduced Shelly Abajian, representing Senator Feinstein; Ameen
Kahn, representing Senator Boxer; Bob Wiedman, representing Senator Pooschigian and Assemblyman
Cogdill; and Congressman George Radanovich. Tom Guarino, County Counsel, reviewed the declaration
of emergency (action was taken on May 23rd), and he presented information on the cost impacts, and impacts to
being able to provide emergency services. He advised that staff is recommending that the emergency be
continued, and that authorization be given to enter into contracts, for up to a total amount of $100,000, if
necessary, before the next meeting. He advised of the emergency advisory council meeting that was held,
and of the discussion of staging someone to monitor the area. He referred to the status of the declaration
process with the Governor, and he advised that documentation is currently being prepared for the Governor
to sign the declaration; and he further noted that the Board asked the Governor to request a Presidential
declaration. Chairman Stetson noted that the County’s response has been as full and active as possible, and
everything has been done to gather information and to make resources available to those impacted by this
situation. He also advised of a meeting he held in El Portal. Motion by Pickard to continue the emergency
declaration, was held pending further discussion and input. Supervisor Pickard asked whether there are any
additional findings to be included in continuing the emergency declaration. Tom Guarino advised that the
Board could include additional information if it wants to wait for the reports before taking action.

Input was provided by the following:

Kome Ajise, District 10 Director for CalTrans, introduced Dinah Bortner/Deputy Director for
Maintenance and Operations, and Julie Dunning/Deputy Director for Public Affairs. Chairman Stetson
commended CalTrans for their efforts with this project. Dinah Bortner reviewed their activities thus far,
including the history of slides in this area since 1999. She advised that they have a team of engineers
looking at a temporary way to get across the river and back to open the Highway to traffic – they are trying
to find a solution that will work while the slide continues to move. She further advised that they are looking at this from an unconstrained perspective in terms of money and environmental issues. They have hired a world-renowned expert with landslides. They are working with the County and with Yosemite to pull together a discussion team to look at all possible options. She advised that they have very rough calculations of the amount of debris that is involved in the active portion of the slide and of how that could impact the river if it all comes down. Dinah responded to questions from the Board relative to the landslide expert, and she advised that it is Duncan Wylie of Canada with 37 years of experience and she provided input on his background. Supervisor Turpin asked if the old rail road grade on the other side of the river would be covered if the slide comes down, and Dinah advised that they will ask the landslide expert to review that potential. Supervisor Bibby commented on public safety in the area and asked how far the barricades would extend, and she asked about plans to monitor the site. Dinah advised of their efforts to provide monitoring of the site and of surveying of the area to compare the activity of the slide. She advised that they do not have night video vision capability at this point. Further discussion was held relative to responsibility for providing the monitoring. Dinah advised that there is a meeting scheduled for 1:30 p.m. this date for all agencies that are involved to look at identifying roles and responsibilities and to combine efforts for a focused plan. Supervisor Pickard asked whether there is a measurable timeframe of being able to make some determination of whether a massive slide may occur; and Dinah advised that they do not know. They estimate that the slide is moving nine inches a day; it could stop, slow down, or speed up.

Chairman Stetson called for input from the public.

Maureen Quintal, co-owner of the KOA Campground in Midpines, asked how long it will be before there is a temporary fix. Kome Ajise advised that as long as the slide continues to move, it will be difficult to do any work.

Jim Dulchich stated he feels the 24-hour watch is mandatory. If the slide comes down and blocks the river, the people up the river will be in danger of flooding. He asked if there is a plan to notify the people in case the river dams. Jim Allen, Sheriff, advised that they have the reverse 9-1-1 notification system and they have personnel to make contacts, and they are working with the Park Service. He noted that they are also concerned about the people downstream in the campgrounds. Jim Dulchich stated he feels the campgrounds that are downstream should be closed so that people are not in danger. He also asked if people with explosive expertise are available if the river dams up. Blaine Shultz, Fire Chief, provided input on their work to create scenarios to give an opportunity to review what the threats would be if the river becomes blocked. He commented on the enormous amount of dynamite it would take to remove the side of the mountain if it came down per CalTrans. He stated he does not know what the proposal would be at this time to clear a blockage. Jim Dulchich questioned whether provisions have been made to run the facilities in El Portal and Yosemite if the power lines come down. Chairman Stetson commented on contacts being made by the Fire Chief to obtain generators if they are needed. Jim Dulchich further stated he does not feel that money should be an issue to repair this. Chairman Stetson noted that there are several issues and several jurisdictions involved.

Mark Hendrickson, Government Relations Manager for PG&E, introduced Scott Rose, Area Maintenance and Construction Superintendent. Mark Hendrickson advised that PG&E could be potentially impacted by this slide and he advised that they are fully committed to mitigate the situation. They have a response team preparing for the relocation of facilities in the area. He advised that PG&E is committed to assisting the County in any manner possible and they are taking a proactive approach and they will use all of their available resources. They appreciate their long-standing relationship with the County. Scott Rose presented information on their plans to relocate the transmission lines and towers to across the river. Mark and Scott responded to questions from the Board relative to the their timeframes for relocating the lines, and advised that they plan to have the survey results this afternoon and the engineers will finish the design work, and they hope to begin digging for the new poles on Saturday. They will fly in equipment and personnel to install the new poles, and hope to have the line completed by early next week. Supervisor Stetson asked how long it would take to restore service if the towers slide in the interim, and he was advised that it would take the same amount of time. He asked about the interruption of service to change over the lines, and was advised that it could take 8 to 12 hours. He asked that the impact be minimized as much as possible and that input be obtained from those affected on the best time to do the changeover. Supervisor Fritz asked for clarification of whether this is a temporary fix, and she was advised that this is a permanent solution; however, they may come back with steel poles in the future. Supervisor Bibby asked that as much advance notice as possible be given to customers of the outage for the changeover.
Marjorie Wass, County Clerk, advised that elections are scheduled for next Tuesday, and she advised of the need to have access to power. Mark Hendrickson advised that they are aware of the elections and they will do everything they can to mitigate the impact so that the vote can be carried out without interruption. Supervisor Bibby commented PG&E for their efforts in this matter.

Dave Martin, U.S. Forest Service Sierra National Forest District Ranger, provided input relative to their expedition of the permit process.

Jim Dulcich asked if the slide comes down before PG&E disconnects the lines, whether several towers could be taken out. Scott Rose advised that would be a possibility; however, they are working on that issue.

Maureen Quintal asked what area would be affected by the power outage, and was advised that the areas would include Indian Flats, El Portal and Yosemite.

Supervisor Turpin thanked Dave Martin, and he noted that both the Stanislaus and Sierra National Forests are involved. Dave Martin clarified that each Forest has jurisdiction over each side of the river; however, the Sierra National Forest has administrative accessibility.

Leslie VanMeter asked about the potential of fires starting from the power lines. Mark Hendrickson advised that they have protection devices.

Sheriff Allen provided additional input relative to the reverse 9-1-1 system and he advised that information was provided to the citizens of El Portal relative to the need to have a rotary phone if there is a power outage. He also advised that they are working closely with the agencies and coordinating with volunteers for notification if necessary.

Jim Dulcich asked if there are any projections on how much the river would back up and what would happen if the river is dammed. Blaine Shultz advised of preliminary review of the potential impacts from inundation; and he advised that they are still working on the calculations. Mike Coffield, Interim County Administrative Officer, advised that the County is at the limit of its technology – hydrology and geology are beyond the ability of the County; however, the County will hire engineers with expertise in these areas if the state and federal government do not pursue this.

Maureen Quintal asked about assistance for individual businesses. Tom Guarino noted that we have been assured that we will get support for whatever is available. Maureen asked about being able to get timely and accurate information. Supervisor Pickard suggested using the website. Chairman Stetson noted that photographs have been posted to the Sheriff’s website.

Supervisor Bibby asked about being able to get a commitment that all of the agencies will work together with the equipment monitoring. Julie Dunning advised that this matter is on the agenda for the agency meeting this afternoon. Board members expressed the need to get the message out to the media that Mariposa and Yosemite is open.

Sonia Brazzel, store owner in town, commented on the negativity being in the news; and she noted that we have so many wonderful things, restaurants and stores for the visitors. She stated Mariposa should be advertised as a place to get away and take a breath of fresh air in the pines and enjoy a nice day out. She noted that we have a State Museum and history to be enjoyed. She stated this disaster has been tough for the merchants.

Jeanine Scott, Zephyr Rafting Company, advised that they are rafting on the Merced River, and that activity could be advertised for the County.

Kenneth Gosting, Executive Director for TIE (Transportation Involves Everyone), presented information on an incident that occurred in Montana in 1959 (Hebgen Lake) and he commented on the potential for a similar incident to occur with this disaster. He stated he feels that we need to differentiate the geographic location of the slide in relation to Mariposa and Yosemite to minimize the damage of the news trying to place everything together. He noted that TIE has been working with two members of the Board relative to the informational message systems and signage and website information for the National Park Service and for CalTrans. He played the recorded message from CalTrans relative to Highway 140. Supervisor Stetson noted that they are continuing to work on these issues. He also noted that the incident in Montana that was referred to, involved ten times the amount of material that is projects in this situation.

Kim Tucker, President of the Board of Trustees for Mariposa County Unified School District (MCUSD) and Mariposa County Board of Education, read a letter into the record, on behalf of the District, regarding the impacts of the current Highway 140 closure.

Patrick Holland, MCUSD Superintendent, provided information on their transportation plans for the remainder of this school year; and he advised of their concern with the additional commute time and its
impacts on staffing and the students and families. Supervisor Pickard asked that the District track its costs and share the information with the County for the emergency declaration process.

Suzette Prue, representing the Yosemite Institute and John C. Fremont Healthcare District, provided a reminder that there are small companies that are being heavily impacted and they would like to be involved. She also noted that the Hospital is supported by the sales tax which comes from tourism, and there is no cash reserve. Supervisor Pickard asked that the information on the impact of the disaster be shared with the County to include in the process.

Kevin Cann, Yosemite National Park Service, commented on the affect the Highway closure is having on their employees. He advised that they have eliminated the problems with waiting at the entrance stations by adding personnel. He further advised that the incident command team is working together, and their goal is communication with good information. They are willing to assist in any way that they can.

Brad Anderholm, Chief Operating Officer for Delaware North operations at Yosemite, provided input on the impact this is having on their employees. He stated he would like the Board to push to get to the Federal level to get a short-term solution, including the possibility of using the Army Corps of Engineers to install temporary bridges.

Dave Martin noted that the slide is on land in the Sierra National Forest, and he extended his assurance that they will do everything within their power to assist with this situation.

Supervisor Fritz thanked Susan Crain and the Visitors’ Bureau for working on advertisement to bring people to the County. She noted that during the 1997 flood disaster, the Small Business Administration (SBA) came in with low/no interest loans. Board members commended the various agencies and YARTS for their efforts in this matter. Supervisor Turpin noted that Highway 132 is an alternate route to Yosemite, and he stated he would appreciate CalTrans’ efforts in helping to influence Tuolumne County for the use of Smith Station Road. He noted that Mariposa County was cooperative with the use of our roads during the recent closure of Highway 120.

Ameen Kahn advised that Senator Boxer has been and will continue to be briefed on the situation. He noted that one of her concerns is the economic impact on the communities and the small businesses; as well as public safety and transportation. He advised that they are working to reach out to as many stakeholders as possible and they are here to help facilitate communication and to assist.

Ron Morehead stated he owns businesses in El Portal and he is concerned with being able to provide temporary housing for his employees. Six hours of travel time is unacceptable.

(M)Pickard, (S)Fritz, Res. 06-215 was adopted finding the local emergency due to the landslides on Highway 140 enroute to Yosemite National Park continues to exist, and continuing the local emergency based on the findings. Supervisor Pickard noted the need to continue to work with the legislatures for a Presidential Declaration. Tom Guarino clarified that the declaration includes information received today for the underlying findings. Ayes: Unanimous.

(M)Pickard, (S)Turpin, Res. 06-216 was adopted authorizing the Interim County Administrative Officer (CAO) emergency authority to expend up to $100,000 to secure services that may be needed for this disaster. Supervisor Pickard asked about the funding source. Mike Coffield advised that the source is the General Fund Contingency; and that if there is time to schedule requests on the agenda, he will do that. Ayes: Unanimous. Tom Guarino asked the Chair to direct the Clerk of the Board to schedule the local emergency item on each of the following agendas until such time as the emergency is resolved; and the Chair so directed. Further discussion was held.

Susan Crain, Visitors’ Bureau Coordinator, provided input relative to her contacts with Edelman and she advised that they have sent out media and radio advertisements; and she would like to extend the dollar amounts in the marketing contracts. She also commented on additional work on the website. Chairman Stetson suggested that the contracts be scheduled for the Board. She commended Don Haag of the Chamber of Commerce for his work with the visitors.

Leroy Radianovich referred the letter he sent to the Board offering his assistance. He also noted that there was a slide when Yosemite was first opened as a State Park and the publicity increased visitation.

Public Presentation: The Public May Only Address the Board on Items Listed on the Special Meeting Agenda – input was taken during the foregoing discussion.

Cc: File