

Neary Lagoon housing project could aggravate area's floods

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SANTA CRUZ — Unless expensive drainage improvements are completed first, the city's proposed housing project at Neary Lagoon could increase flooding problems in the neighborhood, a city consultant told council members Tuesday.

Council members voted to consider the drainage improvements during budget sessions in June.

Meanwhile, they decided to seek a grant from the state Coastal Conservancy to pay for the project, estimated at more than \$250,000.

Citing continual flooding problems in his neighborhood, Blackburn Street resident Charles Tays asked council members to delay the start of the housing project until after the drainage project is completed. Council members took no action on his request.

Consultant Brook Kraeger of Linsley, Kraeger Associates reported flooding has been a documented problem in the streets near the lagoon since 1971.

He said a culvert was built to alleviate the flooding, but Laurel Creek continues to overflow into backyards on Walti and Felix streets.

Flooding is a problem in several other areas near the lagoon, he said.

When the lagoon is high, Kraeger said, the water-carrying capacity of the pipe is reduced.

Other flooding problems are caused by blockage of drainage pipes by tule weeds and by sand. The Public Works Department now uses a fire hose to clean out the sand from a pipe running to the beach. This method "usually works," Kraeger said.

But Tays said it took the city three

days to unclog the sand from the pipe on one occasion.

Under questioning from Councilwoman Katy-Sears Williams, Kraeger said fill that would be used in the housing project would worsen flooding if water levels rose over eight feet. He said that is about the level for a "75-year-flood" — a flood that statistically would occur every 75 years.

Council members accepted a written report from the consultant on the drainage solutions. The proposed improvements include installing a grate to keep the tules from blocking the pipe and building a bypass pump system.

Council members two weeks ago tentatively approved a proposal by the Community Housing Corp. to develop a housing project on city land near the lagoon.