

Capitola's Grand Avenue closure under consideration

CAPITOLA — The Depot Hill Homeowners Association Tuesday night refused to take a stand on whether the city should close all of storm-damaged Grand Avenue.

Association President Norman Sarratt, however, said he favors closing an additional portion of the street for public safety.

The Capitola City Council will again discuss the possibility of total closure on April 14.

A 100-foot-long by 12-foot swath of Grand Avenue, which is located in the Depot Hill neighborhood above the city, fell away last month. The city fenced off an area between Saxon and Central avenues.

Sarratt told The Sentinel he would support extending the closure an additional street, running from Oakland to Central avenues.

He was not so sure about closing all of Grand Avenue, however, since it would prevent vehicle access to both residents of the Crest Apartments, as well as about 10 families of single-family residences.

Councilman Dennis Beltram, who was in attendance with numerous other city officials, has advocated closing the length of the street. He cited not only the possibility of a lawsuit against the city if someone is hurt in another fallout, but the chance of somebody even getting killed.

"The next (cliff) failure could be tonight, tomorrow or a year from now," Beltram said. "That's why we should close the whole thing now."

Sarratt agreed with Beltram concerning the public safety hazard. "Whether to close all of it off, though, is another matter," he added.

While Sarratt described it as "futile" to attempt to stop the continuing cliff erosion, he favored any city effort to "slow down" erosion.

City Manager Steve Burrell told the audience of about 50 that the cliff damage has been estimated at \$1 million, and the City Council has already applied for federal disaster assistance. Whether the feds will approve repair is another matter.

Even with federal aid, however, the city would be responsible for 25 percent or \$250,000 of the repair, added Burrell. A resident assessment district might have to be formed to raise that portion.

Since the number of residents affected is not that great, individual assessments would be quite high for what Burrell admitted could be only a "temporary fix."

In other business, Association members decided to take the lead in forming a "Neighborhood Watch" crime prevention program.

Police Chief Bob Allen spoke, as well as Detective Mike Ward and Sgt. Joe Granada.

Also, a presentation on the controversial Rispin Mansion renovation and development was given by Friends of the Rispin Estate spokesman Barry Staley. The group has come out against the 100-unit senior care proposal.

No stand was taken by the association. The city Planning Commission will hold the first public hearing on the issue Thursday night.