



State Of California

ALFRED E. ALQUIST
SEISMIC SAFETY COMMISSION

Arnold Schwarzenegger, Governor

Minutes of Teleconference Meeting
June 10, 2010
Commission Office, 1755 Creekside Oaks Drive, Sacramento, California

Members Participating

Mark Church, Chair
William Chubb
Sharron Leason
John Littrell
Elizabeth Mathieson
Ali Sadre
Dave Walls

Members Absent

Sally Kay
Christina Curry
Gary McGavin
Michael Stevens
James Schwab
David Thorman

Staff Participating

Richard McCarthy, Executive Director
Karen Cogan, Administrative Manager
Robert Anderson, Engineering Geologist
Dave King, Legislative Manager

I. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

Commission Chairman Mark Church called the meeting of the Alfred E. Alquist Seismic Safety Commission to order at 10:06 a.m. Administrative Manager Karen Cogan called the roll and announced that a quorum was present.

II. CHAIRMAN’S REMARKS

Chairman Church noted that the revised budget released by the governor in May was in the hands of the Legislature, so state agencies were waiting to see the outcome.

III. APPROVAL OF MAY 13, 2010 MINUTES

Commissioner Elizabeth Mathieson recommended revising the first sentence in the last paragraph on Page 5 to clarify her intent. She proposed changing that sentence to read: “Commissioner Mathieson clarified that the building needs to be shaken with the base isolation system active, then inspected; then the base isolation system needs to be deactivated and the building shaken again.”

Referring to the last line of the second paragraph on Page 7, Commissioner Mathieson recommended changing “of Memorial Stadium” to “at Memorial Stadium.”

ACTION: Commissioner Ali Sadre made a motion, seconded by Commissioner William Chubb, that:

The Commission approve the May 13 minutes as amended.

* Motion carried, 7 – 0.

IV. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Budget

Executive Director Richard McCarthy advised that although the fate of the state budget was uncertain, the Commission's budget was in good shape.

Contracts

Mr. McCarthy requested that the Commission authorize the staff to work with the Chair and Vice Chair on a few year-end expenditures. He noted that at the last meeting the Commission approved encumbering approximately \$57,000 for fees to Contracted Fiscal Services; he suggested allotting an additional \$17,000 to pay for the office copy machine, \$15,000 to assist the Building Standards Commission with its retrofit standards work, the subject of a later agenda item, and the remaining balance for human resource services.

ACTION: Commissioner Littrell made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Sadre, that:

The Commissioner authorize the staff to work with the Chair and Vice Chair to purchase as proposed, including up to \$17,000 for the office copier and the remaining balance, after deducting \$15,000 in support for the Building Standards Commission, to the Department of General Services for human resources services.

* Motion carried, 7 – 0.

Update on the El Mayor-Cucapah Earthquake

Mr. McCarthy advised that Commissioner Mathieson helped the staff draft a memo to the Governor's Office regarding the impacts of the April 4 Mexican earthquake on agriculture. He noted that the widespread damage underscores the importance of California's agricultural water system, and the governor is interested in the issue because of the water bond on the upcoming November ballot. He said the Commission is working with San Diego State University to develop maps showing potential areas of vulnerability in California. He suggested that Commissioner Mathieson and the staff meet with the Agency Secretary and the head of the California Resources Agency to discuss next steps.

Mr. McCarthy said the Agency Secretary has proposed inviting Mexican officials and representatives from other state agencies to participate in a workshop in Sacramento. He noted that the Mexican government is applying to the International Monetary Fund for assistance in its rebuilding and recovery efforts.

Commissioner Mathieson indicated that she attended a meeting of the Colorado River Citizens Forum that included a slide presentation by officials from Baja California. She said she learned that the Mexican government had an emergency plan, but flooding and damage to canals and irrigation systems extended far beyond the rupture areas and caused more losses than anticipated. She noted it would be useful to California to continue a dialogue with representatives of the Mexican government.

V. RESEARCH PROJECTS (NEW)

Fire Following Earthquake Risk Project

Mr. McCarthy noted that the administration has expressed interest in the issue of fire following earthquake, a threat which is commonly underestimated in emergency planning. He introduced Professor Charles Scawthorn, Ph.D., Pacific Earthquake Engineering Research Center (PEER), and invited him to give an overview of his proposed research in this area. Mr. McCarthy added that this topic will also be addressed in the PBS public outreach project, which will be discussed in more detail at the next meeting.

Dr. Scawthorn referred to the summary in the meeting packet. He said fire following earthquake has been a significant problem after every major earthquake in California since 1850, especially in urban areas. He noted there were over 100 fires after the Loma Prieta and Northridge earthquakes, straining the capacity of local fire departments. He pointed out that California has problems every year with wildfires in urban interface areas. Dr. Scawthorn observed that high-rise buildings pose a unique problem because of the need for specialized firefighting equipment.

Dr. Scawthorn stated that based on the scenario used in last year's ShakeOut event, experts believe a major earthquake in Southern California could generate 1,600 fires and up to \$100 billion in insured losses. He advised that the adequacy and availability of an emergency water supply is a critical factor in the state's ability to fight fires, and the water supply varies dramatically from region to region. Dr. Scawthorn noted that the City and County of San Francisco has a special auxiliary water system, but other cities such as Los Angeles, San Jose, and San Diego lack this capacity.

Dr. Scawthorn said the purpose of his research will be to examine this issue in more detail, analyzing the current status of the state's emergency water supply, identifying particular vulnerabilities and mitigation measures that can be implemented quickly, and outlining further research that needs to be done. He indicated that PEER has staff with expertise in this area, so PEER will take the lead in developing a white paper to advise the state.

Mr. McCarthy proposed that the Commission allocate \$49,900 for this research. Commissioner Littrell expressed interest in seeing a more detailed research proposal and budget. Mr. McCarthy responded that the staff will develop a contract and line item budget for the Commission's review.

Dr. Scawthorn noted that high-rise buildings are very vulnerable to urban fires, and he said he would make sure this issue is addressed in the study. He noted that he conducted research about ten years ago regarding critical equipment systems in high-rise buildings. He added that he attended a meeting with insurance industry executives the previous week to discuss performance of sprinkler systems after major earthquakes.

Dr. Scawthorn said the white paper resulting from his study will deal with two major issues, the long-term reliability and vulnerability of the state's water delivery system and potential impacts on the state's economy. He added that the reliability of the state's short-term water supply has not really been examined in detail.

Mr. McCarthy clarified that the administration's priority at this point is the water supply in general, but tall buildings will be one of the topics included in the research.

Chairman Church proposed that the Commission approve the funding request as proposed.

ACTION: Commissioner Mathieson made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Chubb, that:

The Commission approve the expenditure of \$49,400 in research funds for this study.

* Motion carried, 7 – 0.

Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) Code Project for Seismic Strengthening of Existing Residential Structures

Mr. McCarthy recommended that the Commission support the Building Standards Commission's efforts to adopt residential retrofit standards. He noted that the California Earthquake Authority has a large mitigation fund for homeowner grants, and it would be helpful to have statewide retrofit standards to ensure a uniform level of quality and safety in this work. He reported that the Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) held a workshop last month to receive comments on the proposed standards, and they will now be forwarded to the Building Standards Commission for adoption in August. He invited Commissioner Walls, Executive Director of the Building Standards Commission, to brief the Commission on this effort.

Commissioner Walls explained that statewide retrofit standards are needed to ensure consistency and quality for homeowners applying for retrofit grants because retrofit standards currently vary considerably from area to area. He said HCD is basing the new standards on the 2009 version of the International Building Code and the 2012 proposed national amendments, so California's adoption of the standards on an emergency basis this year will put the state ahead. He noted that HCD will be submitting the proposed standards to the Building Standards Commission in July, and after a full public comment period, the new provisions can be adopted at the Building Standards Commission's August 16 meeting. Commissioner Walls observed that the retrofit standards will improve safety and stimulate jobs for contractors. He requested \$15,000 to assist in this effort.

Commissioner Sadre asked when the new standards would take effect. He said uniform statewide standards will help improve the quality and consistency of work done by contractors. Commissioner Walls responded that if the Building Standards Commission adopts them on an emergency basis on August 16, the provisions will be filed the following day with the Secretary of State and become effective immediately. He added that the standards will not need to be adopted individually by each municipality throughout the state because they will become part of the state's building code.

ACTION: Commissioner Sadre made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Mathieson, that:

The Commission authorize expenditure of \$15,000 as proposed.

* Motion carried, 7 – 0.

VI. LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Legislative Manager Dave King reported that AB 2512 (Blumenfield), pertaining to seismic safety standards for healthcare facilities, and SB 835 Strickland), a proposal to reorganize and consolidate state government agencies, failed to advance from their houses of origin. He said SB 1227 (Runner), the bill repealing the Field Act and transferring school design and construction oversight responsibilities to local governments, died in committee. He noted that the other bills described in his report were moving forward, and no significant amendments were expected.

Mr. King observed that AB 2362, a bill tied to passage of Proposition 13 that exempts soft-story construction from property tax assessments until a change in ownership occurs, was moving forward without any opposition.

IX. ADJOURN

Ms. Cogan reminded commissioners to submit travel claims promptly so the staff can process them before the end of the fiscal year.

There being no further business, Chairman Church thanked everyone for participating and adjourned the meeting at 11:04 a.m.

Sue Celli
Office Manager

Approved by:

Richard McCarthy
Executive Director