

October 24, 2007

Memo for Town Council, Mayor, Administrator, Planner, Candidates

Re: FEMA flood maps

As requested by the Mayor, I attended a public meeting of the SRIP on October 23.

FEMA has said that they will publish the final flood maps in December, so the purpose of this meeting was to present for comment the most recent findings of Pacific International Engineers (PIE) regarding:

- 1) The peak discharges for a 100 year flood.
- 2) Revised estimates of base flood elevations.
- 3) Technical data necessary for an appeal of FEMA's final flood maps.

Peak discharges at the Concrete gage are used for defining the flood threat. The Corps of Engineers is sticking with 280,200 cfs, while PIE estimates 227,200. These numbers include the four historic floods of 1897, 1909, 1917, and 1921. If those floods are excluded, the PIE estimate would be 188,000 cfs, which could easily be handled by the flood control measures already proposed. The interlocking bureaucracy of FERC, USGS, FEMA and the Corps will not permit any further analysis of the hydrology.

If PIE's 227,200 cfs estimate were used, base flood elevations (BFE) would decrease by about two feet from the figures published by the Corps on February 27 of this year. The figures for La Conner were not available, but will be forwarded to us. I was told that, even with PIE's most favorable discharge number, the BFE for La Conner will go up.

Eight different technical problems with the Corps' hydrology were reviewed in detail and will be addressed in the appeal. These range from empirical data on the Smith House in Hamilton, to the mistakes made by engineer John Stewart when he estimated the historic floods, and mistakes in the 1951 Water Supply Paper on which the Corps relies.

Preston Gates law firm has been retained to help prepare the appeal.

The most significant comments were about the huge waste of taxpayer money, the need for one final sit-down with the federal agencies before the maps are published, and the failure of our congressional delegation to support us or even listen to us.

Sincerely,

Dan O'Donnell