

INDIAN WELLS CITY COUNCIL

March 6, 2025



To: City Council
From: Public Works Department
Prepared by: Ken Seumalo, Public Works Director
Subject: **Whitewater Channel West Drop Structure Repair Project Closeout**

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:

Council **ADOPTS** the Whitewater Channel West Drop Structure Repair project as complete; and

DIRECTS Staff to adjust insurance coverage amount and FEMA reimbursement requests to the final construction cost amount to \$3,635,314; and

APPROVES the final project cost of \$3,635,314, with a supplemental appropriation of \$321,000; and

FINDS the project to be exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Public Resources Code Article 19, Section 15302.

BACKGROUND:

In February 2019, the Coachella Valley was subject to a major rainstorm that produced significant runoff and debris flows in the Whitewater River Channel. The resulting damage from the storm caused the temporary closure of the low-water crossing on Fred Waring Drive just west of the intersection with Eldorado Drive, significant debris deposits within the golf course area of the Whitewater River Channel, and considerable damage to both the East Drop Structure located between Holes 16 and 17 of the Players Course and the West Drop Structure located east of the Eldorado Drive Bridge.

The 2019 storms brought significant silt and debris deposits, and storm flows eroded the north half of the West Drop Structure and the downstream end of the East Drop Structure.

For reference, a drainage drop structure is a facility that dissipates much of the energy in a stream of flowing water. This energy dissipation helps to reduce erosion damage downstream. In addition to preserving the channel through the golf course area, the West Drop Structure protects the golf cart bridge and seasonal driving range area.

In 2023, Tropical Storm Hilary generated an extraordinary surge of stormwater through the Whitewater Channel, causing extensive structural damage and a critical failure of the west drop structure. Notably, repairs necessitated by the severe storms of 2019 had not yet commenced due to prolonged delays associated with federal funding reimbursement agreements and the pending acquisition of requisite design approvals from relevant regulatory agencies. Consequently, the unresolved structural vulnerabilities from the 2019 event significantly compounded the damage inflicted by the 2023 storm.

The February 2019 storm and Tropical Storm Hilary were formally declared natural disasters by the President of the United States and the Governor of California. These declarations activated eligibility for federal disaster relief through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), facilitating access to funding intended to support the restoration and repair of infrastructure damaged by both events.

Under FEMA's reimbursement framework, applicants must submit comprehensive project improvement plans for evaluation and approval before initiating construction activities. Upon completion of all approved repairs, final project costs must be submitted for review to obtain reimbursement for eligible expenditures.

In addition to federal support, the City holds insurance coverage through the California Joint Powers Insurance Authority (CJPIA), providing additional financial protection for infrastructure repair efforts. A funding request totaling \$3,314,314 was successfully fulfilled by the CJPIA, significantly contributing to the financial resources necessary to address the west drop structure's restoration.

During repairs, unforeseen damage was identified, along with a critical need for supplemental rock protection around the basin's perimeter to enhance structural resilience. These additional repairs incurred an incremental expense of \$311,500. In accordance with established funding protocols, this supplementary cost will be formally submitted for reimbursement consideration to both FEMA and the CJPIA.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The initial project bid was awarded at \$3,314,314, with full funding secured through the City's insurance coverage under the California Joint Powers Insurance Authority (CJPIA) policy. However, unforeseen sub-grade complications were identified during the excavation phase, necessitating additional structural reinforcement measures. Specifically, these issues required enhanced rock protection to fortify the concrete basin and ensure the long-term integrity of the infrastructure. Addressing these unexpected conditions resulted in an additional expenditure of \$321,000.

Staff is formally requesting that the City Council authorize an allocation of \$321,000 from the Capital Improvement Fund to finalize outstanding contractual obligations and facilitate the completion of the project. Furthermore, the staff seeks direction to initiate

reimbursement requests from both the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the CJPIA for the total project cost of \$3,635,314.

It is essential to emphasize that the City's financial obligation for this project will be mitigated through a combination of FEMA and CJPIA reimbursements. However, reimbursement from both sources will not fully cover the entire cost in duplicate; instead, the City will recover eligible expenses proportionally, in accordance with the respective funding guidelines and coverage limitations of each entity.

CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT (CEQA):

This project has been assessed in accordance with the authority and criteria contained in the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the State and local CEQA Guidelines, and the environmental regulations of the City. The City acting as Lead Agency, has determined the Safer Streets Phase I project qualifies as being Categorical Exempt from CEQA pursuant to Article 19, Section 15302.