



2026 City Council Candidate Questions

Flooding

To date, 28 years have passed since the 1998 flood event of record and little to nothing has been done at the Pope-Chaucer bridge to prevent creek overflows into the Crescent Park and Duveneck/St Francis neighborhoods. How would you determine what the hold-up has been at SFCJPA, what would you do to expedite implementing a solution, and how would you assure CPNA and DSFNA residents that help is on the way?

BRYNA CHANG

I have already spoken to Crescent Park and Duveneck/Saint Francis citizen leaders who have been advocating for flood protection since before 1998 to educate myself on the issues, and if elected, I would also request a briefing from staff on the current obstacles to progress given that the Reach 1 project (downstream of CP and DSF) was completed in 2019.

I strongly support completing the San Francisquito Creek Reach 2 project, including replacement of the Pope-Chaucer Bridge. Measure S, approved by more than 70% of voters in 2020, committed Valley Water to helping provide roughly 70-year flood protection for about 3,000 Palo Alto properties. I know how important providing this flood protection is to the neighborhoods of Crescent Park, Duveneck / St. Francis and parts of Midtown closer to 101 and that as climate change worsens the risks of flooding only increase. The Newell Road bridge project just broke ground this May, and Pope-Chaucer bridge is the next step once the Newell Road bridge is completed. It is unfortunate that neither has been completed in time to prevent flooding this super El Nino year.

To move the project forward, Palo Alto needs to press for three things now, and I will support our current JPA representative, Vice Mayor Greer Stone, in doing so:

- 1) a strong new Executive Director to fill the vacant position at the JPA,
- 2) a closer working partnership with Valley Water, and
- 3) a firmer City of Palo Alto commitment to advancing the design and securing funding.

The JPA is currently taking three alternatives to about 15% design before selecting a preferred project and completing a supplemental EIR. With the project now estimated at more than \$120 million, this funding must be raised from Valley Water, the state, Palo Alto, East Palo Alto, and other sources.

I also support the Valley Water's current effort to take a leadership role in addressing the flooding risk from San Francisquito Creek rather than having the effort dispersed across the JPA.

To keep the public aware of progress, I would have the city create a webpage dedicated to the current status of Reach 2 and San Francisquito Creek flood protection efforts, the way it does with other projects. I would communicate transparently with CPNA and DSFNA residents about what is actually blocking progress and what a realistic timeline looks like

YUDY DENG

This is another example of projects taking too long and costing too much because we struggle to make decisions and move forward. Residents have waited long enough. What I can promise is that I will push for decisions and action much more quickly.

I want the City, Valley Water, and the San Francisquito Creek JPA at the same table, clearly identifying what is holding things up, who is responsible, what it will cost, and when it will get done. In the meantime, we should improve flood readiness, creek maintenance, inspections, and emergency notifications now.

As for rebuilding trust, there's really only one way to do it: bring residents along on the journey and show them progress after every win. Trust won't come back overnight, but momentum will build as we make commitments, deliver on them, and show people that their government can get things done.

HENRY ETZKOWITZ

Did not answer.

GARY GECHLIK

I am not an expert in hydrology. This is a complex area of civil engineering. The first step is to recognize the scope of the problem, the average non scientist is just guessing, and any credible scientific person would ask for a field report with an expert in the area of hydrology with input from the state as this is an area that touches and concerns a Riparian.

RAYMOND LEE GOINS

I would have to see what the truth is about why it hasn't been done. I then would bring this truth back to the community, and ask them what would they like to do with the options that are available.

BRIAN HAMACHEK

Within my first 90 days, I would seek a public work session with SFCJPA, Palo Alto Public Works, Valley Water, and the other responsible agencies.

I would ask for one delivery plan identifying unresolved engineering, environmental, property, funding, and approval issues. Each issue should have a responsible party, a next decision, and a deadline.

The construction sequence should protect downstream neighborhoods before increasing capacity at Pope-Chaucer. Design, easement discussions, funding applications, and permitting should advance together wherever legally and technically possible.

Council and affected residents should be able to see the schedule, committed funding, grants at risk, and approvals still needed.

ED LAUING

This remains an ongoing issue. The core problem is that the JPA requires the full agreement of five separate entities. All five are not aligned. There are also downriver changes that have to be made in advance of the JPA "fix". Lastly, all the involved city managers and executive teams have been meeting to figure out a financing plan.

VICKI VEENKER

The biggest challenge has been that the JPA requires cooperation and agreement among five agencies. Particularly Menlo Park has been an issue. We can't simply implement a solution on our side of the creek (the JPA cannot force Menlo Park to make corresponding improvements on its side) so we ultimately need agreement on a project all cities will support.

That need for unanimity has contributed to the delay. For example, one of the Reach 2 alternatives came before the board a year and a half ago and MP raised objections on the proposal of flood walls on MP's side, and threatened to vote against any alternative with MP flood walls. That forced us to evaluate other alternatives without flood walls and found all those alternatives to be nonviable.

The other hold up was the 2022 NYE flood which showed our creek modeling was off, so we had to go back to the drawing board to ensure our modeling was up to date.

There have also been issues with Valley Water's role. They are a critical funding and technical partner and have representation on the JPA Board, but their priorities extend throughout the entire county and don't always align with the urgency Palo Alto residents understandably feel about this specific project.

As a result of the above, we should focus on getting the JPA aligned around a technically feasible project, funding strategy, and firm timeline. Doing that will accelerate progress toward a solution at the Pope-Chaucer bridge.