



MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and Council

FROM: Sara Boone Hartley, Interim Director
Watershed Protection Department 

DATE: November 5, 2018

SUBJECT: Lower Shoal Creek Slope Failure Update, November 2018

The memo is an update to the May 4, 2018 Shoal Creek slope failure. Since the July 11, 2018 update, the landslide area has remained generally stable despite the recent rainy weather. The landslide has been recognized as a failure of the underlying clay soils on both private and public property due to inherent instability of the soils and rock combined with rainfall and runoff from the top of the slope. The failure is not the result of the flow of Shoal Creek or any City activity associated with Shoal Creek.

Progress to-date on solutions has focused on four primary areas:

- Contracting with firm selected by City for stabilization;
- Coordination with adjacent private property owners re: access, design and cost-sharing;
- Providing information to media, stakeholders, and public;
- Construction of wastewater and stormwater pipe re-routes.

The City has secured a contract (Phase 1a) with GeoStabilization International (GSI) to provide the next phase of data collection needed for design of a solution. This phase is scheduled to take 3 months. Originally, staff had anticipated authorizing a design-build contract with GSI to furnish additional data collection and perform the design and construction services within a 6-month period. That plan changed due to the continued coordination with adjacent property owners to secure temporary and permanent rights of access to private property necessary to implement the City's original solution. Essentially, the property owners have made their continued coordination contingent upon the City revising its original design to include the owners' preferred design elements.

The City's responsibility extends to the repair of public property/infrastructure and the adjacent private property to the extent it reduces the likelihood of another failure. Staff has been consistently working with the two most-affected property owners to reach an agreement towards a solution that satisfies public and private interests. The City's next proposed step is to compare design alternatives using available data gathered to-date that include a proposal from the property owners that would restore a portion of their property beyond the City's initial plan for infrastructure repair and public safety. Review of the design alternatives will give the City

information necessary to determine what portion of the owners' preferred design primarily benefits private property and requires funding from the property owners.

While the City cannot fund improvements that primarily benefit private property, we can coordinate private and public work through a Community Facilities Agreement to outline the roles and responsibilities of both parties in an equitable and legal cost share. These ongoing negotiations have slowed further progress on the design and construction of an engineered solution.

The Watershed Protection (WPD), Parks and Recreation (PARC), and Public Works (PWD) departments conducted a public meeting on July 19, 2018 at City Hall to provide an overview of the situation and answer questions.

In July, Austin Water (AW) completed construction of a semi-permanent wastewater pipe re-route system that diverts wastewater from the existing pipeline in Shoal Creek to an auxiliary pipeline in North Lamar Blvd. The auxiliary line will operate at capacity but has little room for contingency flows. Thus, it is considered a short-term solution until the collapsed 30-inch line is replaced under the trail along Shoal Creek. Replacement of this pipe will be part of the improvements being designed to remediate the slope.

Finally, WPD is in the design phase for a project to permanently divert neighborhood stormwater runoff in the right-of-way from the affected slope to a drainage channel near Gaston Place. In an effort to minimize runoff from the top slope, the two private property owners most affected by the failure have taken steps to temporarily divert their own drainage pipes that had been discharging runoff onto the slope from the private property drainage.

As soon as we have more defined progress on contracts, agreements, schedules and cost estimates, we will provide another update. If you or your staff have any questions, please contact Mike Kelly, P.E., WPD Managing Engineer, at (512) 974-6591 or mike.kelly@austintexas.gov.

cc: Spencer Cronk, City Manager
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