Staff Memorandum
Public Hearing for CDBG
Second Avenue North Levee

DATE: January 12, 2022

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council

FROM: Chris Johnson, Contract Planner

BACKGROUND

The City of Okanogan applied for a Planning Only Grant from the Department of Commerce (CDBG) in June of 2019 to complete a preliminary evaluation of the Second Avenue North Levee status and secure a suite of alternatives to increase flood protection and resilience. The City secured the maximum grant award of $24,000, and retained Gray and Osborne, Inc. to work with City Staff to complete the report.

The feasibility report documented the condition of the levee, the existing legal easements, encroachments and trespass issues limiting maintenance, and steps required to bring the levee back to an acceptable standard to qualify for maintenance cost share under the Corps of Engineers PL 8499 Process.

KEY FINDINGS

- The levee was initially built to provide flood protection to a 10-year flow (26,000 cfs +/-);
- There have been 10 instances since 1930 when the Okanogan River has exceeded that design standard;
- The levee condition has been deemed unsatisfactory and currently does not meet the 10-year protection standard;
- The City has secured legal easements for all but 4 properties underlying the 2,800 l.f. +/- levee that extends from the Oak Street Bridge to a point near Legion Park; and
- Significant investment will be needed to bring the levee back to a minimally compliant condition (including vegetation and structure removal in identified trespass situations)

ALTERNATIVES EVALUATED

The Gray and Osborn Report evaluated 4 Alternatives based on a combination of improving flood protection, Likely cost of each action, the potential long-term costs of each action, and improved quality of life supported by each action. As detailed in the table below, the investment required to bring the Second Ave North Levee back to a condition that would provide even minimal protection is expect to exceed $100,00, not including abatement of trespass. Meeting the standard for re-admittance into the Corps cost sharing process (PL 84-99) would increase the investment to as much as 1,000,000. This levee would still only provide 10-year flood

protection.
The preferred alternative (#3) would increase flood protection for the highway and city infrastructure significantly by setting the levee back closer to the highway. This option would increase public access to the river (visually and physically), but would require removal and/or relocation of many of the improvements between Second Avenue and the Okanogan River.

It is worth noting that the concept presented as the preferred alternative by Gray and Osborne was first proposed by the City in 1973, following the 1972 100-year flood event.

Predation Prevention Alternatives		
Alternative	**Description**	**Cost Estimate**
1	Repair Levee	10^4 to 10^5 dollars
2	Repair and Rebuild Levee with Drivable Surface	10^5 to 10^6 dollars
3	Setback Levee and Build River Park	10^6 to 10^7 dollars
4	No Action	0 dollars

In order to identify a final preferred alternative, the City will need to complete a public outreach effort to solicit input from not only the immediately affected landowners, but also the remainder of the city residents, as the costs would be borne by all taxpayers. The City will also need to work with our engineers (or other professionals) to determine which of the options area realistic and which could qualify for funding assistance.

In the short-term, the city will also need to notify individual landowners where unpermitted trespass or encroachments have been identified and seek to abate those issues, so that access for flood fight actions can be more readily completed.

Next Steps:

It likely goes without saying that the costs outlined in the planning study far exceed the City's budget for flood fighting at all six levee locations.

Staff has identified several funding opportunities to assist in selecting the right alternative and securing funding for needed engineering and construction support. These include both state and federal sources.

Staff has submitted a pre-application (January 14, 2022) to WA Ecology's Floodplains by Design Program (FbD) for design assistance and public outreach. The FbD process is highly competitive but would be a good fit for this project.

Once we hear from Ecology whether the pre-application is accepted, staff will come back to Council for authorization to submittal a formal grant request.

Action Needed: *I move to approve the contract closeout report and invoices for grant reimbursement from the Department of Commerce.*