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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Rancho Palos Verdes City Council Urges Gov. Newsom to Declare State of Emergency to Expedite Critical Landslide Remediation Efforts

Feb. 20, 2024 (Rancho Palos Verdes, Calif.) — Amid unprecedented land movement impacting local residences, landmarks and public infrastructure, the Rancho Palos Verdes City Council voted unanimously on Feb. 20 to submit a letter urging Gov. Gavin Newsom to declare a state of emergency in the City to waive and/or suspend state permitting requirements for critical landslide remediation efforts. An emergency declaration by the state would allow the City to significantly expedite the landslide mitigation measures identified in the Portuguese Bend Landslide Remediation Project.

“While we know we cannot completely stop the landslide in our community, we have spent years identifying peer-reviewed engineering strategies to greatly slow its movement. Now, we need the state’s help in making their implementation a reality,” said Rancho Palos Verdes Mayor John Cruikshank. “An emergency declaration by Gov. Newsom could help the City expedite remediation efforts to slow the movement as quickly as possible.”

When declaring a state of emergency, the governor has the ability to waive and/or suspend certain state permitting requirements in order to protect against immediate threats to life and property. In this case, a suspension of certain state permitting requirements would allow the City and local Geologic Hazard Abatement Districts to immediately proceed with critical measures needed to stabilize the landslide, without the costs and time delays typically experienced with obtaining permits.

“The City has a landslide mitigation plan that needs to be started now, but we are restrained by following the all-too-lengthy CEQA process that does not account for the immediate safety needs of our residents and entire community within the landslide complex,” added Cruikshank. “We are calling on the state to help us address this urgent problem that will only get worse as we feel the impacts of recent record rainfall in the weeks and months ahead.”

An emergency declaration would allow the City to streamline or bypass permitting for measures, such as:

- Filling fissures to prevent surface water from directly recharging the water table and further lubricating the slip plane
- Constructing drainage swales, lining certain canyons with non-penetrable membrane, and/or installing flexible drainage pipes to properly convey surface water to the ocean and/or sanitary lines to prevent recharging the water table
- Installing dewatering wells in the form of horizontal hydraugers and/or vertical dewatering wells to extract groundwater from the slip plane and reducing the local water table.

The City Council also voted on Feb. 20 to ask Gov. Newsom to request President Biden declare a federal disaster, which could potentially make federal assistance and funding available. In addition to submitting the letter to Gov. Newsom, the Council voted to expedite the Portuguese Bend Landslide Remediation Project by directing City staff to complete the Final Environmental Impact Report (EIR) and final engineering for the project based on its original concept design. With this approach, the City expects to move up the project's Final EIR release date to May 2024 instead of September 2024. This alternative approach could still allow the City to make changes to the project based on a concurrent analysis of options to reduce environmental impacts.

Over the past year, the City of Rancho Palos Verdes has contacted state and federal representatives to convey the urgent nature of the accelerating land movement in the greater Portuguese Bend Landslide Complex. In those discussions, City staff emphasized the need to immediately respond to the unprecedented rate of land movement and its severe damage to Palos Verdes Drive South, utility lines (water, sewer, gas line and electricity), eight miles of trails in the Palos Verdes Nature Preserve, the closure of residential streets, the temporary closure of a federal and state designated historic landmark, Wayfarers Chapel, and the red-tagging of homes.

For the latest updates on the landslide, visit RPVca.gov/LandMovement.

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About the City of Rancho Palos Verdes

The City of Rancho Palos Verdes is located on a coastal peninsula overlooking the Pacific Ocean in the South Bay of Los Angeles County. Incorporated in 1973, the City is home to 42,000 residents, 7 1/2 miles of coastline, a 1,500-acre nature preserve and hundreds more acres of open space. Residents and visitors enjoy expansive ocean views and ample opportunities for recreation, including golfing, hiking, beach access and whale watching. Notable landmarks and points of interest include the Wayfarers Chapel designed by Lloyd Wright, the Point Vicente Lighthouse, the Point Vicente Interpretive Center, Terranea Resort, the Palos Verdes Nature Preserve and Trump National Golf Club.