

CAPSS Advisory Committee Meeting

June 10, 2009 Meeting, 11am to 1pm, Summary Notes

Policy response to CAPSS soft-story report

- The meeting began with a discussion of the lack of response by the City to the project's report, *Here Today-Here Tomorrow*, released in February. The Mayor's Office said they would follow up with the committee on the report's recommendations. Committee members asked for a status report.
- Hanson Tom reported that DBI had developed a technical bulletin to guide the voluntary retrofitting of soft-story structures, and that city policymakers were now considering legislation to waive some fees for owners who take this step. He also mentioned that DBI has been contacted by companies such as Hardy Frame and Simpson that are interested in developed specialized products to help retrofit San Francisco soft-story buildings, such as particularly narrow frames.
- Debra Walker reported that two supervisors (Chu and Chiu) have asked the City attorney to comment on repurposing bond funds for unreinforced masonry building retrofits so they can be used for retrofits of other building types. The Mayor's office wants to wait to put this on the ballot until the mandatory program is being enacted.
- Committee members asked at what point do they, as citizens, have an obligation to get more involved to push the mandatory legislation forward. It was asked if the committee had a list of specific actions that should be taken to move this process forward. It was proposed that the committee should write a letter to Vivian Day outlining the steps that need to be taken to move the program forward. Individual committee members could then take this letter to their supervisors and share it with other community groups.
- One item that needs attention is identifying technical standards for retrofits. George Williams mentioned that he has a soft-story building that he would like to retrofit now, but he has no assurance that his retrofit will meet whatever standards are put in place for a future mandatory program. It was suggested that the program should exempt reasonable retrofits conducted before the program from its mandates. Tom Tobin reported that ATC has secured funds from FEMA to develop performance based retrofit standards for soft-story buildings. These standards would be inspired by San Francisco, but would be applicable to soft-story buildings nation-wide.
- It was noted that the CAPSS report recommended DBI form a task force but that one had not been created.
- DBI's current budget problems mean that there is no staff member who can focus on developing this program. It was suggested that Strong Motion Instrumentation Program funds could be used to support a staff member to do this. A second letter could be written to Vivian Day requesting that these funds be used for this purpose.
- It was suggested that committee members could invite a representative from the Mayor's Office to attend the next meeting.

Seismic safety legislation sponsored by Assemblyman Blakeslee

- Assemblyman Sam Blakeslee's aid Kevin Erickson called into the meeting to report on Blakeslee's legislative package related to seismic safety. Blakeslee has three pieces of legislation currently pending:
 - AB43 would allow the California Earthquake Authority (CEA) to hire as many employees as needed using current funds. Currently, they are capped at 25 employees. This legislation would allow CEA to change temporary workers into fulltime employees. It would also create a position called Chief Mitigation Officer to focus on developing statewide mitigation programs. This bill is currently going to the Senate Banking and Finance committee.
 - AB280 would develop a mechanism to give federal stimulus funds to local jurisdictions to support mandatory soft-story retrofits. This bill was based on the information in the CAPSS report. This bill is currently suspended because the Appropriations Committee wanted them to better identify the source of federal funds for the program. San Francisco legislators Ma and Ammiano, as well as many others, support this bill.
 - AB928 would establish an earthquake early warning system. Funding would come from high speed rail funds. This bill is expected to be taken up early next year.
- Mary Lou Zoback reported that she had raised the issue of federal funding for soft-story retrofits during her visit to Pelosi's office early this year. She was told that every year the Mayor of San Francisco submits a list of requested funding to Pelosi's office, and getting soft-story retrofits placed on this list would increase the likelihood of getting funds. She also reported that many people thought that any federal funds for this type of program should come through FEMA.
- Committee members asked questions about AB280, such as whether existing local funds (e.g., the UMB bond funds that could be repurposed) would affect the City's ability to get funds from this program, or whether it could negatively impact the City if their program started before the state program. Erickson replied that it was the intent of the legislation to encourage, not hinder, retrofit and he would modify its language to clarify that City's should not be penalized for starting early or investing their own resources.
- The Committee asked what they could do to help Blakeslee's efforts. Erickson replied that helping to identify a funding source for AB280 would help, and that advocacy was needed in Washington. It was suggested that SPUR could help during its trip to DC in October.
- After Erickson's call, it was noted that federal stimulus funding projects for the Bay Area were already finalized. Possibly FEMA has been given additional funds that could be used for this purpose.

Technical Review of Vulnerability Report

- Tom Tobin presented the progress made during the June 3 meeting of the CAPSS Project Engineering Panel. The panel and other interested technical advisers met to discuss technical aspects of the draft report *San Francisco's Earthquake Risk*, prepared by the previous CAPSS team in 2001-2003. This report estimates the amount of damage that could occur in four scenario

earthquakes. The purpose of the meeting was to look at the work done and determine if it was done well enough and is appropriate to guide City policy. A detailed summary of the meeting's discussions was distributed. During the meeting, attendees listed technical issues of concern and discussed those which most people felt were important. Technical issues discussed included new scientific methods to estimate how much shaking will occur in locations at various distances from the fault, the way single family homes were modeled, the respective risk of midblock and corner buildings, the level of detail at which the report presents results, translating report results into terms of occupancy and functionality, and comparing the scenarios studied to Loma Prieta.

Topic of Future Meetings

- The group discussed the topic of future meetings. Fire following earthquake was suggested as a potential topic for the July or subsequent meeting. A small number of committee members agreed to work together to find good panel members to discuss this issue at a future meeting. The issue of gas shut off valves was discussed, and it was noted that these have pros and cons. Concern was expressed that all of the seismic safety measures the project will recommend, including those related to fire risk, will lead to increased rents for tenants as their costs are passed through by landlords. San Francisco is already a very expensive place to live.

Next Meeting

- The next meeting will be held on July 8, 2009.