

November 25, 2024

Via U.S. Mail and email (nsrivatsa@ci.lafayette.ca.us)

Ms. Niroop Srivatsa  
City Manager  
City of Lafayette  
3675 Mt. Diablo Blvd. #210  
Lafayette, CA 94549

Subject: Lafayette Reservoir Tower Retrofit Project

Dear Ms. Srivatsa:

I am writing to you in response to the information that was posted on the City's website on November 20, 2024 titled, "Lafayette Seeks Public Input on EBMUD's Design for Seismic Retrofit of Iconic Lafayette Tower."

In that announcement, it states,

- "Despite requests from the City and public input in favor of retaining the current look of the tower, EBMUD plans to proceed with their design for the seismic retrofit which shortens the 170-foot tower by 40 feet, starting in 2025." and
- "A group of Lafayette residents ... found that the tower could be retrofitted at its current height ... [and] expressed concerns that the proposed shortening of the Tower could increase the seismic risk for the downstream residents in Lafayette in the event of a major earthquake."

I would like to share additional information about the project in case you or others are not familiar with the extensive work EBMUD has done over the last three decades.

Over the years, EBMUD has analyzed over a dozen designs to maintain the height of the existing tower and submitted at least three potentially viable options to the California Division of Safety of Dams (DSOD). DSOD rejected all of those options. The City's announcement on November 20 suggests that EBMUD has not responded to requests from the City. To the contrary, EBMUD worked closely with the City's Advisory Committee, spending more than \$500,000 in ratepayer dollars to evaluate the Committee's proposed alternatives. In working with the Committee, EBMUD delayed construction of the project by over a year, also at great expense.

To be clear, the alternatives proposed by the Committee were thoroughly evaluated and found to be infeasible by our structural engineering consultant, who has extensive expertise in dam

structures. However, EBMUD did not stop with the Committee's alternatives and analyzed a similar option to maintain the height of the tower. The analysis found that the full height of the tower would need to be reinforced, along with a more extensive and complex retrofit of the outlet conduits, which are pipelines buried within the dam embankment that convey water from the reservoir to the creek. A preliminary analysis found that alternative to be less reliable, more difficult to construct, and would cost at least \$8 million more than the shortened tower option. Furthermore, given our experience and discussions with DSOD, the likelihood of DSOD approving this alternative is extremely low.

Also, contrary to the announcement stating that the proposed shortening of the tower could increase seismic risk, DSOD recently reaffirmed that the current design to shorten the tower remains the only approved solution to address the seismic deficiencies of the nearly 100-year-old tower. This was stated by DSOD during the August 7, 2024 meeting where they affirmed that numerous studies completed over the past 30 years have "concluded that reducing the tower height is an efficient solution" that addresses the risks and meets DSOD's criteria. This was also discussed in the letter DSOD sent to the City on November 8, 2024, where they stated, the "project as currently proposed by EBMUD, satisfactorily addresses DSOD's concerns."

While EBMUD has analyzed innovative solutions in the past to maintain the height of the tower, including those presented by the Committee, DSOD stated (in the November 8, 2024 letter to the City) that Lafayette Tower is a critical structure for dam safety (because it also serves as the spillway and sole structure for controlled release of water), and "any innovative remediation proposed must have a dam specific record of proven performance." Put simply, solutions that work only on paper will not be acceptable to DSOD.

EBMUD recognizes that the City, its Advisory Committee, and some members of the community do not want the tower to be shortened, primarily because of concerns about the tower's aesthetics. However, I want to remind you that EBMUD has spent decades trying to find an alternative to maintain the current height of the tower. In addition, EBMUD has developed a design for the top of the shortened tower that was inspired by the community's input and includes a metal operating house that is similar to the existing tower. At this point, we must move forward with our plan to protect the safety of downstream residents, schools, and businesses from Lafayette to Martinez. We are at the 90% design stage for the shortened tower and are preparing for construction to begin in 2025.

EBMUD will begin an outreach campaign to provide detailed information about the project, its necessity, and the updated tower design. A project webpage has been developed and will be updated as the project progresses toward construction in the summer of 2025 (<https://www.ebmud.com/about-us/construction-and-maintenance/construction-my-neighborhood/lafayettetower>). The webpage also includes the Lafayette Dam breach inundation map and timeline.

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As I have shared with you, EBMUD values its relationship with the City and remains committed to collaborating with the City and engaging the community as we move forward with this project and other projects in the City. We look forward to working together to safeguard Lafayette and surrounding communities.

Sincerely,



Clifford Chan  
General Manager  
East Bay Municipal Utility District (EBMUD)