



State Of California

ALFRED E. ALQUIST  
SEISMIC SAFETY COMMISSION



*Arnold Schwarzenegger, Governor*

Minutes of Teleconference Meeting  
March 11, 2010

Commission Office, 1755 Creekside Oaks Drive, Sacramento, California

**Members Participating**

Mark Church, Chair  
William Chubb  
Christina Curry  
John Littrell (joined at 10:06 a.m.)  
Elizabeth Mathieson  
Gary McGavin  
Ali Sadre

**Members Absent**

Sally Kay  
Sharron Leason  
Michael Stevens  
James Schwab  
David Thorman  
Dave Walls

**Staff Participating**

Richard McCarthy, Executive Director  
Karen Cogan, Administrative Manager  
Robert Anderson, Engineering Geologist  
Dave King, Legislative Manager  
Henry Reyes, Structural Engineer  
Fred Turner, Senior Structural Engineer

**I. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL**

Commission Chairman Mark Church called the meeting of the Alfred E. Alquist Seismic Safety Commission to order at 10:03 a.m. Administrative Manager Karen Cogan called the roll and announced that a quorum was not present. Executive Director Richard McCarthy suggested proceeding with the agenda items but refraining from taking any action until a quorum was present.

**II. CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS**

Chairman Church welcomed everyone to the meeting. He noted that the State of California is facing unprecedented fiscal problems and cutbacks in vital programs and services, and for that reason, the Commission decided to hold a teleconference meeting instead of going to a location in the field. He observed that the recent significant seismic activity throughout the world underlines the ongoing importance of the Commission's work.

### **III. APPROVAL OF JANUARY 14, 2010 MINUTES**

At 10:06 a.m., Commissioner John Littrell joined the teleconference, and Chairman Church noted that a quorum was present.

**ACTION:** Commissioner Ali Sadre made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Littrell, that:

*The Commission approve the January 14 minutes as presented.*

\* Motion carried, 6 - 0 - 1 (Commissioner Elizabeth Mathieson abstaining).

### **IV. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

#### **Budget Update**

Mr. McCarthy said state agencies have been instructed to curtail spending drastically, as reflected in the letter from the State and Consumer Services Agency included in the meeting packet, and the only purchases being allowed were for mission-critical items. He advised that the Commission sent a packet to the Senate Budget Committee explaining the Commission's operations and services, including a breakdown of how research funds have been leveraged to create products of value to the state. He noted that for every research dollar spent, the Commission has been able to leverage about 2.6 dollars.

Mr. McCarthy indicated that the staff was working to resolve discrepancies between the staff's budget projections and those of Contracted Fiscal Services. Legislative Manager David King stated that the Commission will have a small year-end surplus.

#### **PEG Lawsuit against Commission regarding Furloughs**

Mr. McCarthy informed commissioners that the Seismic Safety Commission and a number of other state agencies with staff engineers had been named as defendants in a lawsuit filed by the Professional Engineers in Government organization in opposition to state-mandated furloughs. After some discussion, commissioners recommended that the staff contact the Department of Personnel defense counsel to determine if the lawsuit will have any financial implications for the Commission.

#### **Website Statistics**

Mr. McCarthy drew attention to the Website usage summary in the meeting packet, and pointed out the spike in activity immediately after the earthquake in Chile.

## **V. LEGISLATION: CURRENT BILLS**

Mr. King reviewed pending legislation of interest to the Commission.

Mr. King reported that the staff is tracking six state bills: AB 1659 (Huber), a proposal to examine state commissions and boards; AB 1755 (Swanson), a measure allowing contract assessments to encourage property owners to undertake seismic retrofits; SB 1205 (Corbett), which would create a Bay Area Post-Recovery Authority to develop and implement a long-term regional recovery plan; SB 1227 (Runner), an attempt to eliminate the Division of the State Architect's (DSA's) role in reviewing public school projects and repeal the Field Act; SBX8 13, adding a surcharge to homeowner insurance policies to fund fire equipment and other emergency response programs; and SBX8 29, which would eliminate furloughs for employees of state agencies not funded from the general fund.

Commissioners asked whether SB 1227 was likely to succeed. Mr. King said the bill was still in its early stages, so its ultimate fate was uncertain. He added that Senator Runner made similar attempts to eliminate DSA and the Field Act in the past. Mr. McCarthy reported that DSA bin time has decreased from 12 weeks to about 4 weeks, a substantial improvement that addresses one of the major criticisms of the Field Act. Commissioner Gary McGavin commented that many delays are due to incomplete submittals rather than DSA processes.

Mr. Lee Adler, Executive Director, Structural Engineers Association of California (SEAOC), advised that SEAOC was opposing SB 1227, and the professional engineer and architect organizations are expected to take a similar position. He expressed concern about shifting rigorous Field Act oversight to local jurisdictions that might not be equipped to handle continuous inspection and other requirements.

Mr. King said the staff is also watching three interrelated federal bills pertaining to post-disaster recovery, HR 2555, HR 4014, and S 886. He noted that Mr. Glenn Pomeroy, Chief Executive Officer of the California Earthquake Authority (CEA), discussed these bills at the last meeting, and the Commission passed a resolution supporting them.

Chairman Church thanked the staff for the report.

## **VI. POTENTIAL RESEARCH PROJECTS**

### **Fire Following Earthquake**

Mr. McCarthy reported that the staff was scheduling meetings with fire experts and insurance industry representatives to identify the types of research project that would be of most value to them. He said he would apprise commissioners of the dates.

### **Economic Recovery (Post-Disaster)**

Mr. McCarthy noted that the staff was working with Business Executives for National Security (BENS) to arrange meetings with industry representatives in San Francisco and San Jose to

determine priorities and impediments to rapid post-disaster recovery. He added that he envisioned this process leading to some action items and ideas for legislation next year.

### **PBS Statewide Media & Community Engagement Campaign**

Mr. McCarthy advised that PBS submitted a \$1.3 million proposal for media and community outreach. He noted the Commission is providing \$300,000 in research funds, the California Emergency Management Agency (Cal EMA) is contributing \$500,000, and another \$250,000 will come from the CEA. He said he asked PBS to reduce the scope of the proposal to fit within the budget and would bring the revised proposal to the Commission for further review.

Mr. McCarthy said this project will focus on ways to communicate effectively with the public and will include distributing information with electronic media such as YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook. Commission funding will help produce informational items and a television special. Mr. McCarthy indicated that he would have more to report at the April teleconference meeting.

### **Performance of Hospitals During Earthquakes and Post-Earthquake Fires (UCSD)**

Senior Structural Engineer Fred Turner discussed a proposal from the University of California at San Diego (UCSD) for a detailed performance study of hospital systems. He said the project entails construction of a five-story test building that utilizes different types of construction and includes components typically found in hospitals, such as elevators, fire protection systems, a mechanical room, and instrumentation. He noted that the Commission is being asked to provide \$300,000 in funding for a model intensive care unit, a base isolation system, video documentation, and research in seismic performance of nonstructural hospital components. Mr. Turner estimated that the work will take 12 to 18 months and will yield considerable useful information.

The Commission's money will design the nonstructural components in the ICU and other funds will pay for the structural design. It was noted that UCSD has been able to obtain in-kind services and donations from manufacturers of hospital equipment and devices. It was noted explained that the project is already underway, and the Commission is being ask to fund certain enhancements.

Mr. McCarthy said UCSD will be required to provide matching funds, and the Commission will request an itemization. He added that 18 months may not be enough time because the contracting process typically takes six months, and the Commission's research funds could expire before the project is completed.

Commissioner McGavin pointed out that this project will be the first comprehensive test of nonstructural systems in hospitals because previous research has focused just on components.

Mr. McCarthy said he would provide additional information at the April meeting.

## **VII. STATUS OF EXISTING RESEARCH PROJECTS**

### **Tall Buildings Initiative**

Mr. Turner told the Commission that the Pacific Earthquake Engineering Research Center (PEER) had encountered further delays in its project schedule, so estimates of direct and indirect costs, a cost-benefit analysis, and an invitational workshop would be delayed several months. He reported that the Commission asked PEER to revise the contract and include some new conditions calling for a progress report and a postponement in the release of critical design guidelines. Although PEER agreed to issue a progress report in early April, they still want to publish final design guidelines in time for a May conference. Mr. Turner explained that the staff has concerns that the guidelines should not be released until the entire project is completed.

Commissioner Sadre observed that the Commission-funded work will not be finished until next fall. He agreed with the staff that the design guidelines should incorporate the findings from that portion of the project as well. As an alternative, he suggested getting PEER to at least agree to issue a separate appendix or chapter once the work is completed.

Mr. McCarthy suggested that Commissioner Sadre discuss this idea with PEER representatives after the meeting.

### **Tsunami Threats to the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach (Currents from Earthquake in Chile)**

Commissioner Mathieson observed that the Commission's research project to develop a methodology to assess tsunami threats to the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach came at an opportune time because the results of the study were used to predict tsunamis after the Chilean earthquake. She said the Commission's \$50,000 contribution was leveraged with funds from the University of Washington and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to identify seismic events that pose the most risk to California. She noted that the researchers used existing inundation models and looked at over 300 simulated earthquakes to determine the most hazardous scenarios.

Commissioner Mathieson stated that the methodology was then applied to the recent magnitude 8.8 earthquake in Chile to estimate wave heights and current velocities likely to affect California's major ports. She indicated that the predictions were fairly accurate, and although there were no large waves, the resulting small tsunamis did cause some minor damage in port areas.

Dr. Eddie Bernard, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), congratulated the Commission on its foresight in addressing this problem. He reported that Dr. Costas Synolakis had some interesting reports regarding what he observed from a fire boat during the event. Dr. Bernard said he was trying to get NOAA to install meters in Los Angeles Harbor to measure actual current velocities in the future.

Commissioner Sadre asked about tsunami risks to California from distant sources. Dr. Bernard said the earthquake in Chile has a return period of 50 to 100 years, and past events of a similar magnitude have occurred regularly. He noted that tsunamis caused by large seismic events in Alaska are California's greatest threat, but tsunamis could also be generated from offshore faults and landslides and from other areas in the Pacific Rim. Commissioner Mathieson said the research report identifies 11 major earthquake threats and their locations.

Dr. Bernard stated that Dr. Synolakis will use the methodology developed by NOAA to conduct more detailed studies of the California coast. He thanked the Commission for its assistance and support.

Mr. Anderson asked if NOAA would allow the Commission to post a hyperlink to the report on the Commission Website, and Dr. Bernard responded that NOAA would be pleased to have such a link.

### **Pilot Program for Evaluation of the Most Seismically Vulnerable California Public School Facilities**

Senior Structural Engineer Henry Reyes noted that the Commission approved \$200,000 in research funding in February of 2009 to assist the Office of Public School Construction (OPSC) in developing a pilot program to evaluate the most vulnerable public schools in California. Under the pilot program, OPSC will contract with structural engineering teams in northern and southern parts of the state to create a template for engineering analysis. That methodology will then be used by school districts statewide to evaluate the seismic safety of their most vulnerable buildings.

Mr. McCarthy noted that the cost of structural engineering evaluations has been an obstacle preventing many school districts from accessing bond funds for needed repairs. He said the funds from the Commission will be used to develop a standard process that will facilitate the evaluation process necessary to obtain retrofit funds.

Mr. Reyes advised that OPSC plans to select structural engineering teams in May, execute contracts in June, and complete the pilot program by December. He said the Commission will have an opportunity to review the results in October.

Chairman Church thanked Mr. Reyes for the update.

### **VIII. MISCELLANEOUS/GOOD OF THE MEETING**

Ms. Cogan reminded commissioners that financial disclosure forms were due to the Fair Political Practices Commission within a couple weeks, and she urged those who had not completed their forms to do so as soon as possible.

Ms. Cogan noted that the governor would be issuing a proclamation designating the week of March 22<sup>nd</sup> as Tsunami Awareness Week in California.

**IX. ADJOURN**

There being no further business, Chairman Church adjourned the meeting at 11:37 a.m.

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Sue Celli  
Office Manager

Approved by:

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Richard McCarthy  
Executive Director