

Gene Sampley:

The Board has requested that I review with them the status of Gages Slough and the work that has been to date. I would like for the benefit of those present and even the Board would like to refresh a little bit the history of Gages Slough and the County's involvement in it. And we will just go with the recent past; go back and— In 1972 we originally cleaned the Slough— We may have before that. I couldn't find any record of activities prior to 1972. We cleaned Gages Slough from the outlet to McCorquedale Road. Like to put up a drawing of the Slough area on the west side of Burlington it will be a little bit difficult to see because of the scale.

Bud Norris:

Will you point out the freeway on that thing?

Gene Sampley:

Yes. If I can get this out a little bit here. Don't want to cut anybody off. Here we have I-5 here, twenty (20) here. This is the Pulver Road, McCorquedale Road, I-5 Auto World is here, Hopper interchange and Skagit River running here. The slough is colored in blue. We have this reservoir that is not discussed often, but it is a part of the storage capacity of Gages Slough. Burlington City Limits runs in this area here. The area from McCorquedale Road to the outlet into the river is very flat. I mean it is essentially a flat grade through here, there's just no fall. There is a little bit of fall, maybe a couple of feet from 99 which would be Old 99, which would be in this area somewhere, down through this vicinity. So this is not a significant drainage problem because of the fall although there are some problems in the area that have been discussed in the past. The most critical thing as far as cleaning the outlet of the pipe is the lower reach that we've discussed most recently from McCorquedale to the outlet. This, as I mentioned, was cleaned in 1972— Was the first effort that we have records that are immediately accessible. In 1978 there was an attempt to form a zone that would address the Gages Slough problem. It addressed the entire Slough from the east side of Burlington on the northeast, all the way through the City of Burlington, which was— Had a different boundary at that time— all the way down through the outlet. That particular hearing met with considerable opposition from the County perspective due to, we feel it was due to misunderstanding as to the scope of project.

Bud Norris:

Let me clarify. It wasn't met with opposition from the County Government standpoint but from the people who were offering input to the Public Hearing.

Gene Sampley:

That's correct. The County held a Public Hearing to consider the establishment of a zone. In fact, as I understand, there were two Public Hearings, and that was prior to my coming, so I'm not real sure of the logistics of that process although

the environment was still warm when I got here in August. So I know that it did receive a great deal of discussion and it was-- Has to have been considerable discussion since that time. There's been various discussion relative to the slough and in 1982 we developed a brief report as to what we felt immediate needs might be. I've got a copy for your information and this was initiated most recent activity with the City of Burlington, and the State back in 1978, there was considerable coordination with the City to gain their participation and contribution to the public hearing process and the zone should it be established. This, just drop down almost to the middle of the report. Indicate that there is a very flat channel grade and the paragraph says "it has attempts to correct the above conditions along the entire Gages Slough waterway have been unsuccessful. We recommend that the area most severely affected, that part of Gages Slough from Interstate 5 to the outlet, be addressed as follows: First recommendation was to construct and install a five thousand gallon per minute pump station on Gages Slough at the east end of Bennett Road (which would be this area here, again this is Pulver Road, Bennett Road and the Skagit River). Several reasons for selecting that site (etcetera). Second, uh next paragraph, the pump station should be designated to accommodate additional pumps should this condition become necessary in the future. The next paragraph, clean the channel of Gages Slough from the proposed pump site upstream to McCorquedale, excavate to the best grade possible because of the flat terrain, just very critical. ~~Reconstruct the field crossing about midway between the proposed pump station and McCorquedale Road and replace at grade.~~ This proposal-- We were asked to meet with the City Council-- City asked us to meet to discuss. We approached the City relative to this need. The work, the County approached them. So they asked us to come and discuss it and as a result of that discussion, the City suggested that let's don't do all the work now; let's do it in two phases. Let's clean the ditch and see if that won't help it enough so possibly it won't need a pump. It was, I think, September of '82, we even negotiated on that up in to January or February of '83 I believe and finally determined that the City was pressed for funds and there were some circumstances surrounding that we modified the proposal at that time into two phases that would clean the channel-- Our original proposal was if we cut it out in two phases, was to replace the pipe at McCorquedale, replace the pipe at-- on the Pulver Road and to replace the Field crossing here and that would provide for any future improvements in that we felt this would be permanent installations and we could work from there. They requested that we not replace the pipe at McCorquedale, felt that it possibly wouldn't be necessary if we just cleaned the ditch out so-- And there was some concern about replacing this pipe but, we did negotiate the cleaning of the ditch, replacement of the pipe on Pulver Road and replacement of pipe in the field. This was accomplished. The State of Washington, Department of Transportation, supplied the pipe

for this installation as their contribution which we had asked them to participate and met with them and were agreeable. Yes Sir?

Bud Norris:

Seemed to have been some concern as to the completeness of that dredging or activities, activity from the McCorquedale Road down. Was that taken care of with a complete clearing?

Gene Sampley:

Yes. Originally we— When we came through here, we found a log jam, two log jams in there that we couldn't address with a drag line at the time.

Gene Sampley:

In the second phase we have gone in and cleaned out those log jams and the slough is clean to my knowledge except for what vegetation has grown since the work was done. So this phase I work was accomplished. Estimated cost was twelve thousand dollars, the actual cost was approximately twelve thousand five hundred, so we did end up within four percent of our estimate. Felt that was really good under the circumstances. That is about where we are today. There has been some discussion, I'm sure you're aware and I think a lot of people are interested in the installation of a pump. My concern is that some may feel that the County hasn't addressed the problem. That's been the thing that's been a stumbling block for a long time— is getting something going on a pump. Situations have changed. At this point, I'll just turn it back over to you because technically from a staff level, that's where we are and where we have been.

Jerry Mansfield:

Refresh my memory. What was the agreement with the City at that time as to the percentage of participation. I don't recall.

Gene Sampley:

The City agreed to participate forty percent in this work. The State agreed to a straight ten percent and the County fifty percent. And the State has some right-of-way in there is how they get involved. Plus their contribution due to I-5 is a factor so they did feel that that was an appropriate area for them. However, they have no commitments for any future work.

Bud Norris:

Well I would think that that would be our position too as far as the percentage goes. We're looking basically at the end result of a drainage system here. End of fact. There are very few contributing factors within the framework of that area that you've depicted right there.

Gene Sampley:

I might mention the way this got started. I think this is something I should mention. The County's interests, or the work that we did in developing this report in 1982— Local farmers in this area were concerned about the slough and the effect that it was having on their ability to farm this ground and that initiated our 1982 report that I gave you a copy of. So

I think that it is significant that they were speaking of the impact directly--

Bud Norris:

We recently requested that Bob Schofield, along with working cooperatively with yourself, do a study of that particular area and see if we can come up with a management plan that would be acceptable and affordable. If Bob's here, oh, yeah, there he is. Has that been initiated and are we in the process of accomplishing that study?

Bob Schofield:

Mr. Chairman, if you will recall, the first step in that process was to contact the Department of Ecology and ask them for an opinion on the shoreline aspects of it and get their recommendations. That was done several weeks ago and I met with Rod Mack and his people. So they are presently investigating that. At the same time I suggested that they may want to participate financially in this study and they have that under consideration. Now, we are not actively pursuing the study until we get that recommendation from the Department of Ecology which we expect any minute.

Bud Norris:

How long has it been, or has there ever been a comprehensive study of Gages Slough performed?

Bob Schofield:

To my knowledge there has never been one. It's our opinion that it's high time there was one.

Bud Norris:

~~Okay. Well, that's basically the update that I was looking for. Do either of you have any further questions?~~

Jerry Mansfield:

I'd like to assume there are some differences of opinion regardless of where we are or what our intentions are, you know how the City and the County work. I'd like to hear what their concerns are.

Bud Norris:

Basically this was scheduled as a discussion item on our agenda and we weren't anticipating a large group discussion at the time we placed it on the agenda. However, after reading the newspaper last Friday, it appears there was a high level of activity surrounding the subject at the last Burlington City Council meeting and assuming that the account was accurately reported, it appears that we may have some differences of opinion. Would like to give Burlington or anyone else in the County an opportunity at this time to voice your opinion. If you would please, give us your name and address for the record.

Ray Henery:

I'd like to speak first. I'm Ray Henery; I live at 1509 Avon Street in Burlington. We did have a discussion at our Council meeting last Thursday night which we have done at several Council meetings. And our Council is unanimous in the feeling that we should do something down there. We've studied this thing to death. You have two or three or four options which we think are-- I'm in agreement with a hundred percent. I

think they're good options that you've come up with. And it's the one of putting the pumping station at Gages Slough and Pulver Road. The cost is fifty-one thousand nine hundred eighty nine dollars-- Fifty-two thousand dollars. And our Council, and myself included, are anxious that we get this thing started. That we do something down there. We've taken a lot of abuse from people on this thing and I think what we should do is clean this thing out from McCorquedale Road down so that we get the fall. I'm not an engineer. But clean that thing out, put a holding reservoir of some kind in there and put this pump in that pumps five thousand gallons a minute.

Bud Norris:

We proposed that exact project over a year ago. Are you saying then that the City Council, City of Burlington has now changed their mind and are ready to cooperate in the project?

Bob Henery:

Yes. We've always been ready to cooperate.

Neil Morrison:

Ray, my name's Neil Morrison, I live in Burlington and I'm a member of the City Council. When we were originally presented with the proposal, quite a few of the City Councilmen went out and walked along the area. If I recall correctly, we even phoned and invited you to go with us while we walked that area. I was even bugging one time when we made that phone call and we walked it and the thing was bogged up. You could look down through the field and you could see all sorts of debris and things growing there. So it wasn't a matter of being obstinate or noncooperative. What we wanted to first see is if that was cleaned out whether there would be a need for a pump station. In other words, we thought perhaps if the level was caused just by the obstructions. So we set out and agreed to that portion of the plan. It wasn't an idea that this was the end, it was a start. You're right of the times. It's been a long time. The only thing I wanted to point out was we were not trying to block anything. What we were trying to do was see if something could be done at a lower cost before we went into--

Bud Norris:

Well, let me assure that my statement was not made in an accusatory manner whatsoever. We did present the overall project. Our engineers at that time advised us that that was the only solution. And for the reasons that you just stated, evidently some hesitancy approaching the overall project at that time and I will restate my question. Is the City of Burlington at this time ready to go forward with the project as previously proposed by the County?

Neil Morrison:

I think so. I think we'd be interested. We have a real problem here-- Not only the City but also the County. With new projects coming up all the time there is more and more water going into there. I think the longer we stall and fool around the worse it is going to get. I think I can say if we talk with the City of Burlington for our Council and say that we are

ready and willing to go ahead with this pump station and Gages Slough and Pulver Road.

Bud Norris:

I guess I would have a question of our staff at this time because the issues surrounding this particular project have changed somewhat in the last year, year and a half, and we've made a conscious effort to keep ourselves uninvolved or at a distance so that we don't appear to be meddling in the city's affairs, with those other issues. I'm asking a question of the staff at this time by participating in a project at this level are we committing to this level of participation then here on out. Because as I mentioned before, this is just an end result or end effect of an overall drainage system. I don't know that it would be in the best interests of Skagit County to commit to this level of participation from, you know, through the future. We've been supportive in the past and I think that now at this time, are supportive of a project to alleviate the problem that exists right now. However, if different plans come to parition there are some potential impacts we may not be able to handle with the proposal that you have right here. That would be one of my concerns, do you can see that as a commitment from here on out?

Gene Sampley:

Two things I'd like to address in response to that. Number one: Is it in the past, even today, very recently we have been bit, if you will, by circumstances that come up because we have participated in the past in something that we have been obligated forever more. I would say that should an agreement be developed, it would have to be worded very carefully that the County wouldn't buy a proportionate share of all future activities because it depends on where the development occurs and where the water contributions come from. So that's one thing-- Another thing is that the design of the installation is such that it could accommodate growth and additional water by installation of additional pumps. We have intentionally designed it that way. We have half a dozen installations in the County now, which are multiple pump installations for some real advantages in lower flows, It's a redundancy, there's just a lot of reasons why you want to do that. So, for the future, the capacity or potential for handling the runoff would be there. Although I think the County should be very careful how any type of agreement is worded as far as the future is concerned.

Bud Norris:

Okay. Gene, you said-- One additional thing in conjunction with that. We do have a study that has been initiated, we're in the process of getting it put together. Do you think it would be in order to install this type of a pumping device prior to the completion of that study? Do you think that that would skew the results of the study at all? Basically what we're attempting to accomplish is that we're trying to lower the level of the water to a manageable level and we have proposed that for quite some time now. Do you feel

that that would get in the way of that study at all or cause concern from that standpoint?

Gene Sampley:

We discussed that at length with our consultant. There can be no guarantee that it wouldn't cause some effect in the study. However, it was our general consensus of everyone that participated in that, that one of the recommendations of that study would be to install a pump anyway. The size of the pump may differ over time, but as we mentioned the modular effect, modular design of the facility we're speaking of would accommodate that. I don't think it would be something that we would feel would need to be undone as a result of the study.

Jerry Mansfield:

I think, you know, if we don't do something about this shortly, we are going to end up with statements like this or our thinking, saying things. I think the concern here must be 'what is our responsibility? The City's, The County's' and let's get on with the phase of it, the portion of it we can do and had agreed previously would resolve it for the moment. I am concerned with the question you just asked and I think Burlington would understand that. We don't want to inherit the water or the responsibility for handling the water for future development that we would have no control over. We have been under criticism in some areas and have had to make as you, certainly, difficult decisions at our level here regarding drainage from Bow Hill, for example, because we have got to be concerned with where the water ends up and what we're doing to people on below there. I think that's a responsibility everybody has to consider. I'm sure you would recognize that concern we would have. I think now there is a responsibility on our part and participation on your part to resolve this problem that exists here right now. I think we have to understand, as someone once said: 'Let's make it perfectly clear' that we want to discuss this any additional as Bud has emphasized and I can only reiterate that strongly-- so that we don't have this sort of confusion in the future.

Dave Rohrer:

Yeah, it's been an ongoing problem for many years as you all know and I can distinctly remember approximately eighteen, twenty years ago we talked this same thing. So it is something we need to address; it's not been just yesterday and I agree with Ray and the rest of you that we need to do something but we need to address what we are going to do and how we are going to handle it in the future. I sort of agree with Bud there that we don't need to take full responsibility for the drainage and need to talk it out right now. Get together and do some further discussion of it. Get our heads together and get ready and let's make some firm decisions and go.

Ray Henery:

There's a couple other Councilmen here from Burlington; if they have any comments I certainly would like to have them make it.

Bud Norris: If anyone has anything to offer on particular proposal, I'd welcome them to speak up--

Neil Morrison: Yeah, there is one thing that you said when you were talking Bud, my name is Neil Morrison. And you caught me off guard 'cause I hadn't heard it before. And that was that you planned to lower the level of the water.

Bud Norris: Maintain it at a manageable level.

Neil Morrison: Because we had never heard or thought that it would involve actually lowering or changing substantially what it is right now. During the flood periods the pump would be in action. And remove the water 'cause you don't have natural drainage at that time--

Bud Norris: We're talking about managing the water. The reason that we've had-- Reason is that we have some farmers in that area that can't get on their lands in the spring time to plant their crops. That's a concern to us. It's going to be of concern to us if the level of that water is potentiated by development also because those people are going to have that much more of an effect.

Neil Morrison: We're in the process of passing an ordinance about the retainage of water toward any development.

~~Bud Norris: Any other comments at this time concerning this proposal?~~

Larry Kunzler: Larry Kunzler, 4801 Francis Road, Nookachamps Valley. Commissioners, I don't want to come across like I'm against the pump station, because I'm not. It's needed. But I think at this time it is premature until the complete topography study of that area is completed. 'Cause we don't really know and you can't make a decision on cost ratios on who has to pay for what until you know who is going to put the majority of water into the Slough. And the topography study will give you that data. I'm also a little concerned that most people are under the impression that Gages Slough ends right there where it goes into the river. The slough goes to Pulver Road, then runs around Pulver Road, then heads on out past Avon and goes all the way out to Padilla Bay where it links up with Indian Slough. Indian Slough and Gages Slough and Skiyou Slough and Hart Slough-- They're all part of the same slough, they just have different names. And to address this issue properly, you have to look at the fallout from all of those sloughs. I also don't believe that we are going to be able to get the permits for this pump station, until the DOE solves the wetlands issue and the effects of the pump station would have on the flora and fauna within the slough. To get a firm decision, I agree there should be perhaps a committee set up to draw up a plan but until the topography study is done, I think it is premature to commit.

Standing

Bud Norris: How critical do you folks, both Gene and a representative of Burlington, feel that timing is on this particular proposal on the pump itself now that we have gone the period of time we have. Is it important that we get it done within the next three months or—

Gene Sampley: We wouldn't dare put the pump in until next spring until after we get the high water out of the way because we would have to cut the dike in order to put the outfall in. There would be no way that I would recommend cutting the dike at this time of year.

Bud Norris: Okay. Is it possible that the study would be somewhere near completion at that time?

Bob Schofield: No, I don't believe so, I think the Department of Ecology recommendation will be here well before then. But I envision the study will have to go over a full rainfall year to gather the data we need.

Gene Sampley: I believe— Excuse me Mr. Chairman, I believe that if when we originally recommended it that we had proceeded on it, it would have been in. I think it is important from my standpoint anyway to me to say that because of the way the article was written, I just don't feel that it is a fair shot at us to say that we're dragging our feet.

Ray Henery: I didn't know that we were going to cut the dike anywhere. I thought that was one of the reasons for this pumping station was to not cut the dike, to put it over the top.

Gene Sampley: Because of the elevation of the road, we— It's not practical to run a pipe over the top. Anyway there's a ninety day shoreline process we have to go through and just from a realistic standpoint, it's not too practical to think that we are going to get it in before spring.

Ray Henery: What kind of a guarantee do we have then, do we have any kind of a promise or anything that by next spring we are going to get something done?

Jerry Mansfield: Well, I think we're going to act.

Ray Henery: You're talking about a lot of agencies involved, you know. Everybody is telling Skagit County and Burlington what we have to do. And I think this is our problem. I think Skagit County and Burlington could solve this problem without all this malarky. I know you smile and we have to go through it. But it's still not right that we have to sit down and listen to some guy from Olympia tell us— The Corps of Engineers could give a hoot about this thing a few years ago. We went to them and they said it is not our concern, it's your concern.

Bud Norris: Well, that's the laws that we live under, Ray, and you were aware of that . . .

Ray Henery: I'm just expressing my opinion.

Bud Norris: Some the frustration in that . . .

Ray Henery: We have to live with the malarky these clowns almost studied this to death, but when we were concerned a few years ago when I was on the Council, the Corps of Engineers wasn't even concerned. They said it's your— It's your problem, go ahead and do what you have to do.

Jerry Mansfield: Well . . .

Ray Henery: So . . .

Jerry Mansfield: Excuse me, Ray, I think it is our problem, and I think that Burlington and Skagit County have to be the ones to solve it. Obviously, however, we have to go through certain permits . . .

Ray Henery: I can understand that.

Jerry Mansfield: The process is here that's there no way around it, but it's still is encumbent upon us to decide between Burlington and the County that yes we are going to do it, and we've been ready to do it for some time. If you're saying you're ready now, let's all of us save a little— Let's do at least that portion down there and this means starting the process, deciding to do it and starting the process now so that time doesn't lag beyond that.

Bud Norris: Linda, did you have a comment?

Linda Arentzen: Soil Conservation District. I just wanted to add that it's really nice to see the County and Burlington willing to work together on this project, and I do feel because of the problem with the farmers out there and the water conditions, that time is a factor to help the tax, those people living in that area. They're the people living in that area. And I would really feel that the County and the Burlington should proceed and with the study continuing on also. But I don't feel that you should stop with the idea of a pumping station just because the study is not done.

Bud Norris: Well, Ray, has this-- Has the City of Burlington then committed at this time their portion of the, the projects, whichever one that might be selected? The plan, the project that might be selected would be a sixty-four and a half thousand dollar project?

Ray Henery: Well, we haven't taken official action yet, but we are— We are in agreement with the Council, is in one hundred percent agreement, that's what we'd like to do.

Neil Morrison:

Now, I would like to add one other thing, when we have these hearings in the City, over half the people in attendance are from the county. We have the vast majority of the interest outside the City of Burlington with what we're doing. And the things that we're doing they are recommending, it's not, we're not, you might say, working exclusively for the City. What we're doing is leaving it in the charge of the people of the county.

Bud Norris:

Well, I'm sure they're quite concerned because they're the recipients of the water. Okay, well, I would like some time to work with our Public Works Director on this and see what the time frame is. I personally don't feel that my opinion has changed over the last five years. I think that there has to be something done there to manage the level of that slough, and I think it should be coordinated now with the study that's been proposed. I think that only makes good sense. I think that we should go ahead and initiate the process to put that pump in. However, at the same I would insist that Skagit County in no way is obligated to this level of participation on any future activity to . . .

Ray Henery:

Don't you think you're starting to kind of bear that out as to where the responsibilities should be?

Bud Norris:

Probably, but whatever the study says in the interests of the Skagit County's budget, I'm just saying that we aren't committing to this level of participation for future projects.

Ray Henery:

I don't think the City of Burlington has any problems with that at all.

Bud Norris:

Okay. We'll get back to you. Now, Ray, how about this offer we can't refuse? I want to hear that one. (LAUGHTER)
Thanks for coming over.

Jerry Mansfield:

Thanks, fellows.

Floor:

Thank you.