Memorandum

To: **Steve Lazar, Senior Planner**

CC:

From: **Mario Kalson, Director of Environmental Health**

Date: **December 30, 2024**

Subject: **Compliance update for 473 Quarry Rd., Trinidad CA; and, environmental health considerations for Emergency Housing Ordinance revisions**

UPDATE ON COMPLIANCE WITH PUBLIC HEALTH DIRECTIVES

At the Board of Supervisors meeting, on November 5, the Board received a report on the results of an inspection on October 3, of the property at 473 Quarry Road (herein, "the property") by county staff from the Department of Health & Human Services - Environmental Health Division (DEH) and Planning & Building Department. Imminent hazards to public health were discovered during the inspection, including unpermitted waste and wastewater facilities with high potential to contaminate ground and surface water. At the recommendation of staff, the Board moved, unanimously, to require the owner take immediate action to mitigate risks. Below is a list of the articulated requirements and the status of each:

1. Disassembly, cleaning, and disinfection of the unpermitted privies followed by disposal at an appropriately permitted solid waste disposal facility or transfer station.
    a. Incomplete: Wood portions of the privies have been removed and disposed. Completion of this task requires demolition and disposal of cinderblock foundation(s).
2. Disposal of 2-4 yards of domestic septage (human waste with added wood chips/sawdust) through hauling it to an appropriately permitted municipal wastewater treatment plant or by burying it onsite in an area and fashion approved by DEH.

    a. Incomplete: A portion of the waste has been buried onsite in an area compliant with applicable regulations. Remaining waste (~100gallons) is secured in sealed drums pending onsite burial after the wet weather season.
3. Installation and maintenance of two portable toilets and one hand washing station at the site.
    a. Complete
4. Installation of a lockable cover at the top of the drilled well casing to eliminate risk of contamination to water supply by insects, rodents, stormwater intrusion, etc.
    a. Incomplete: Well cap has been re-seated to reduce potential for contamination however risks remain. DEH has provided guidance on eliminating risks of contamination.
5. Sampling water from the existing water well for total coliform and E coli/Fecal coliform bacteria and providing bacteriological drinking water quality test results to DEH on a monthly basis.
    a. Ongoing: Testing results shared with DEH confirmed no bacteria present at the time of sampling on November 25. Monthly testing results are required.

DEH supports consideration of the petition to change the General Plan Land Use Designation or Zoning on the property with commitment, by the owner, to completing the public health requirements and compliance with local and state law.

A General Plan and/or Zoning Amendment may provide a mechanism to permit the development; however, compliance is contingent upon the carrying capacity of the site, the natural characteristics and capacity of the property to provide private water and support the design and installation of adequate wastewater systems in compliance with local and state regulations.

Below are some additional considerations relevant to permitting criteria that may impact the Board decision on supporting General Plan and Zoning amendments.

Water

- When a water system has 15 or more service connections or serves 25 or more individuals a day for at least 60 days per year, it is classified as a “Community Water System” and is subject to regulation and inspection by the State Division of Drinking Water. Smaller water systems are primarily regulated at the County level.
- Demonstration of adequate water supplies are required by county code to ensure that people have minimum quantities for health and safety needs. Dry weather pump testing results of the water source are needed to determine if sufficient water exists to serve the number of permitted structures. The Dry Weather Pump Test season begins August 1 and ends September 30, and may be extended depending on the timing of the first rains of the fall.

Wastewater

- Determining areas and capacity of the property for the design and installation of an onsite wastewater treatment system is needed. Because portions of the property are known to have high ground water, wet weather testing must be performed through installation of monitoring

wells near potential future leach field locations. The wet weather testing period began on November 25, 2024 and will likely continue until April 1, 2025.

- Understanding the property's potential for hosting leach fields and other septic system components will determine the maximum number of tenants the site can support and the location of shared restroom and bathing facilities.

WATER AND WASTEWATER SYSTEMS FUNDEMENTAL TO EMERGENCY HOUSING VILLAGES

The Emergency Housing Village (EHV) ordinance may provide important opportunities for supporting communities of unhoused people. Flexibility in minimum standards may be appropriate in a declared shelter crisis. However, prudence requires that all communities are supported by human services, safe transportation, access to healthy food, adequate water supplies and fully compliant wastewater infrastructure. Water and wastewater systems, in particular, are fundamental in avoiding the generation of environmental health emergencies and elevated risks to the general public and exacerbating risks for, in the EHV scenario, an already vulnerable population. When mismanaged wastewater has capacity to amplify infectious disease and impact the environment through contamination of water resources.

In consideration of amendments to the Emergency Housing Village ordinance, Environmental Health staff recommend prioritizing connection to municipal sewer and water systems to ensure necessary treatment of wastewater and water supplies adequate for sanitation. It may be possible that human services, safe transportation and healthy food are available beyond the boundaries of municipal water/wastewater systems. In this situation properties owners with interest in providing housing opportunities in alignment with the EHV, should be required to comply with local and state law for testing and installation of permanent onsite wastewater treatment systems (OWTS) and demonstration of adequate water supplies.