

ECA Spec Meeting Minutes

11-16-22

3:30pm-5:00pm

In attendance: Nick Sudano, Flannery Banks, Casey McDonald, Dale Smith Dennis Dalby, Bob Harder, Geoff Coleman, Brett Wilmes Staff: John Bly

Held at the North Coast Builders Exchange Board room

Note: You are receiving these minutes because you have either participated on the ECA Spec Committee in the past, or we feel this particular meeting subject on Low Impact Development construction is of importance to your firm. If you would like to join the ECA Spec committee, we meet every other month on the 3rd Wednesday of the month, 3:30pm-5:00pm at the North Coast Builders Exchange main Board room. Call me for additional information please-John Bly, 707-483-0859. If you are not a member of the ECA, you might want to join just for the Spec Committee interaction and information we receive.

11-16-22 ECA Spec Meeting Attendees:

Chair Dale Smith, RCX, Geoff Coleman, BKF, Brett Wilmes, Stony Point Rock, Dennis Dalby, Civil Design, Casey McDonald, Adobe Associates, Bob Harder, Engineer, Nick Sudano, City of Santa Rosa Senior Environmental Specialist Storm Water and Creeks, Flannery Banks, City of Santa Rosa and John Bly, ECA

The agenda was regarding Low Impact Development technical manual and training and the problems that seem to be more prevalent lately. Here is the "intro" of what the problem seems to be:

*The North Coast Regional Water Board is enforcing the LID requirements more vigorously now, and into the foreseeable future. The reason for this is that there seems to be a lack of education and performance by any number of entities-from design professionals, to owners, to developers, to general contractors, to the landscape architects and contractors that are tasked with installation of the soils, piping, and plantings that are intended to perform to the LID requirements. The purpose of this ECA Spec meeting is to discuss the issues the awarding agencies are having getting the final product they want, need, expect, and now demand, and the constructability issues that may be hindering those results.

* Nick informed us there is a webinar coming up, and the link to the technical manual and the webinar on 11-30-22 info is here: [Low Impact Development Technical Design Manual | Santa Rosa, CA \(srcity.org\)](#)

As you all are aware, Low Impact Development is a design approach that integrates specialized landscape features into the urban environment. Runoff is directed into these features where it can soak into the ground. This approach mimics the storm water benefits of the natural environment. Specialized swales, planters, and raingardens provide beauty while also slowing runoff and removing pollutants. Plants and microbes that live in healthy soil use pollutants as nutrients, removing them from runoff. However, when the improvements are not constructed properly, it is expensive, time consuming, and frustrating to owners, City staff, engineers, and general contractors and their subcontractors (landscape architects and landscaping firms) to

tear out the work and redo it. Generally, the non compliance is discovered at the end of the construction phase, and the City wants to clearly pass the maintenance and performance of the improvements on to the owner, and they are unable to do so until performance is proven.

With that description as a backdrop, clearly there is an issue that deserves discussion. From the City's standpoint, "what is needed and desired (and in their opinion, clearly required), is not getting built. The City (and the North Coast Water Board) want it built right, and they are willing to be engaged with questions and additional training for professionals (there is an LID Technical Training being offered on 11-30-22 from 8am to 12 pm).

From the general contractor perspective, it is not at all clear where the "disconnect" is taking place. Clearly, the GC's that are building these improvements, can and do, understand that they are building infrastructure that collects, passes, and disperses stormwater in such a manner as to mimic natural rainfall that utilizes plants and soils to interrupt flows and cleanse the runoff of unwanted nutrients and pollutants before the runoff goes into our storm drain system and creeks and waterways. The general contractors build the infrastructure, then it is generally up to the landscape professionals to furnish and install the specialized soils, and plants in such a manner as to comply with the LID and the final performance requirements.

Why is this not happening?

We got a variety of reasons that were discussed:

Sometimes, it was suggested that the engineers are not clearly letting the GC know what is expected, and required of them (even though it is supposedly in the LID manual).

Sometimes, it was suggested that less scrupulous GCs were constructing the underdrain system thinking it was supposed to retain water, rather than "hold" water then percolate it out at an acceptable rate-the example of lining basins with visqueen was presented as illustrating this disconnect.

Sometimes, it was suggested that the GCs built everything right, and the landscape architect or landscape contractor came in and compromised their work in putting in water lines, electrical lines, etc. and planting plants and installing soils to the "standard of the industry" rather than to the LID manual.

All in all, it was a great discussion of a growing problem. We discussed the fact that we should bring this up for a followup ECA spec meeting to consider solutions now that the problems are better understood.

Reminder-

ECA Spec meets every other month on the 3rd Wednesday from 3:30-5:00 pm at the NCBE Board room. Agendas will be put out about 10 days in advance so the correct people from the City, County, or Regional Board can be invited to attend.

Thanks

John Bly

Executive Vice President, Northern California Engineering Contractors Association
(www.nceca.org)