This is an information report and no Council action is required.

DISCUSSION
Historically, the City of Palo Alto and approximately 85 percent of water utilities in the United States use main flushing to improve water quality for water customers. Water utilities may flush distribution mains for a variety of reasons: corrosion control, sediment removal, taste and odor control, control of color, high turbidity, low chlorine residuals, or bacteriological growths, or as a response to customer complaints. The main objectives of Palo Alto's flushing program are to improve water quality, control bacterial growth and remove built-up sediment.

Between 1990 and 1993, the Palo Alto Water Utility did not perform an annual main flushing program because of the drought. During this period, customer water consumption was also reduced, thereby accelerating sediment buildup in the mains. During 1992, there were numerous complaints about Palo Alto water quality. In response, staff took water samples and found that the reduced water quality was due to the buildup of sediment in the mains. Additionally, the Palo Alto Fire Department found more sediment in it's equipment from the City's water system during 1992. Water Operations staff has flushed mains every year since 1993. Since 1993, staff has not received water quality complaints due to sediment build up in the distribution mains because of the success of the annual water distribution system flushing program.
Beginning March 11, 2002 and continuing through March 17, 2002, the City's Water Utility Operations Section will open fire hydrants to flush out sediment that has collected in the mains during the past year.

The water system main flushing schedule will be mailed to the City's water customers through utility billings and displayed in the Palo Alto Weekly, Palo Alto Daily, City Internet Home Page, and on the AT&T Broad Band Services community access channel.

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