

SPECIAL JOINT TOWN COUNCIL / EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS COMMITTEE (EPC) MEETING  
JANUARY 31, 2006

ROLL CALL

Mayor Toben called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m. Ms. Howard called the roll:

Present: Councilmembers Davis, Derwin, Driscoll and Merk, and Mayor Toben; and  
EPC members Michelle Green, Al Baron, Derry Kabcenell, Wil Patterson, David House, John  
Boice and Chairperson Marianne Plunder  
Others: Town Administrator Howard and Deputy Clerk Hanlon

ORAL COMMUNICATIONS: None

REGULAR AGENDA

Mayor Toben said he called this meeting so that he and the other Councilmembers could get a hands on acquaintance with the response the Council was expected to exhibit in the aftermath of a natural disaster. He said the EPC and Councilmember Merk had been working on this question for many years. This was an opportunity for the Council to hear the Committee's current thinking on how things were going, what needed to be done, and what the Council should understand in terms of major responsibilities in the face of this eventuality.

(1) Presentation: Preparedness for Emergency Response in the Town

Marianne Plunder introduced EPC members present and special guests John Carnes (CERPP); Bill O'Callahan (County Office of Emergency Services); Greg Smith (Red Cross-Chief Public Support Officer); and Andrea Reid (schools liaison).

Ms. Plunder used slides and discussed: 1) emergency preparedness resources; 2) communications structure; 3) government agencies and what they could do for the Town; 4) levels of preparedness of schools, individuals, and CERPP; 5) calendar of past and future events/training; 6) Town EOC, backup EOC, and EOC chain of command; 7) achievements; 8) training needs and budgeting; 9) emergency equipment and supplies; 10) agreements with Town institutions and businesses; 11) Woodside's level of preparedness; 12) outreach for more volunteers to be trained; 13) staff needs during a disaster; 14) need for evacuation plan(s) and shelters; 14) need to establish mutual aid agreements with neighboring towns; 15) EOC activation; and 16) scenarios for response to fires and/or earthquakes. In terms of recommendations, she said it was crucial to commit to significantly increasing the training of staff, EPC members, and volunteers. Drills and refreshers were also very important. Interagency communication needed to be improved, and more volunteers were needed.

Mayor Toben thanked Ms. Plunder and the members of the Committee for their work. He said there was clearly a lot of work to do. It was important to work out in advance as much as possible. There were a number of skills that would be absolutely critical. He was pleased that two of the EPC members were ham radio operators and thought it would be helpful to know how many others there were in the community. Responding to Mayor Toben, Ms. Plunder said the Committee was not thinking in terms of "week one" and "week two" following a disaster. They were thinking in terms of hour zero to hour seventy-two when help would arrive from the various agencies. Mayor Toben said that had not been the case in New Orleans. The Town was isolated and could be very far down the list. Ms. Plunder pointed out that not everything was in place for hour zero to hour twenty-four. She also felt that there was a very different level of preparedness in Town than there was in New Orleans. Many people had generators, food for six months, etc.

John Carnes said he felt the community would do well in the 72-hour timeframe. His concerns were on the shorter end--the zero to a few hours timeframe--when most people would be consumed with their own immediate surroundings. As hours passed, those neighborhoods that were prepared would kick into action. That was when the minor but urgent types of problems of utility shut off, damage assessment, situation status, and prioritization of information flow to the EOC would happen. That had all been practiced. The Town was a little bit thin as the first round of people wore out, and there had not been any practice on replacing people, transitions and keeping continuity. That was a very difficult thing to exercise. Past the 24- to 48-hour timeframe, the things that would burn would have burned and the people who were seriously injured would be either stable or dead. Those kinds of urgency situations faded into the background, and you were left with questions like, "How do we live in our damaged environment." He agreed the cavalry would not come to the Town in 72 hours and maybe not in a week. But, the community was relatively well off and full of single story, wood frame homes. Most of those would be fine after an earthquake, and most of the people had houses full of things, like camping equipment in the garage, that were resources for survival. More urban areas with multi-family type dwellings would be much less able to care for themselves. The Committee's concerns were not about sheltering vast numbers of residents. It was more for special needs populations; some of that could be done in the neighborhoods and not in shelters. As the Town moved beyond the 24- to 48-hour timeframe, the community would be faced with things like broken infrastructure, which could last for months. Being better prepared for that would make it better for individuals. In fairly short order, the Town would need to figure out what structures could stay, what structures were safe, who could occupy, etc. Those were decisions that would fall on the Council, and the pressures would build fairly rapidly for those processes to happen. In the 1- to 2- month timeframe, everyone would want to start rebuilding.

Bill O'Callahan said there were some things the Town would be able to get help with, such as getting people to assess buildings. The Town would have problems, but other cities would have much bigger problems. Once the Town opened the EOC, it could ask for assistance, and the County would do its best to help.

Bill Lane said one of the resources that rarely was mentioned was the automobile. It was important to get the word out not to let the car get down to  $\frac{1}{4}$  tank of gas. The car had a charger for the cell phone, and it could also provide warmth. Many people in Town had 2-3 cars, and cars were a good resource of power, heat and protection. Responding to Mr. Lane's question about preparedness at The Sequoias, a Committee member said they had a good emergency preparedness committee that had drills for earthquakes and wildfires. They were well organized and had radios and all the necessary equipment. Ms. Plunder added that The Sequoias had made it clear that they wanted to be an island and needed to take care of their own people; they were not prepared to take in the public. They were very well prepared in their own realm. There was much more of a possibility of sharing resources with the schools. Mr. Carnes confirmed that CERPP was not planning on The Sequoias to provide any kind of shelter or medical resources for outside people. If they believed they were capable of offering excess resources, they would probably do so just as any other neighborhood would.

Councilmember Driscoll said at the training session in October, there was a supposition that the city government was the top of the pyramid and that the police department, utilities, etc., reported to the Mayor. The Town was actually independent from these agencies. There needed to be clear lines of coordination and authority in place to avoid parallel decision making among those groups that would be active during a complex emergency. Ms. Plunder agreed that the Town could not work in a vacuum. Mr. O'Callahan said the Town had contractual arrangements with West Bay, Woodside Fire, the Sheriff's Office, etc., and needed to have communication or a liaison with all of the agencies identified in the EOC. Either you needed to be able to talk to them or have them present, and this should be worked out in advance. There might need to be someone from the Sheriff's Office in the EOC to coordinate what was going on.

Councilmember Davis suggested there be a field trip to demonstrate where the EOC and supplies were,

how to turn on the radio, where to go at the schools/Priory, etc. Ms. Howard noted that staff had done that on several occasions. A committee member suggested there be a resource finder section included in the Emergency/Disaster Response Handbook. Ms. Plunder said the Committee had talked about using pictures with a short narrative showing where things were, how to turn on the radio, etc.

A CERPP representative described information compiled by CERPP that included maps of all the neighborhoods in the divisions, communications, shut off valves, etc. He said there was a test taking place this evening of communication between divisions; there was a lot going on.

Responding to Councilmember Derwin, Ms. Plunder said any resident could be a volunteer. Their skill set would define where they would be more suitable. She said around 20 volunteers were needed. The EOC needed to be staffed when the Town Center staff was not here. There also needed to be multiple shifts.

The group discussed the Emergency/Disaster Response Handbook. It was noted that some of the sections came from an emergency plan that was prepared for Portola Valley several years ago and needed some work.

Mr. O'Callahan said there would be a countywide earthquake exercise from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. on April 20, 2006. All of the EOCs would be exercised and all the communications throughout the County would be tested. Mr. Carnes said CERPP would be conducting an earthquake exercise in the evening of Friday, April 28.

Jean Austin, Bayberry, said she was on the Ranch CERPP committee and had gone through a lot of training. She asked if there would be room in the new Town Center for a radio control room and a good antenna that would not fall down in an earthquake. Councilmember Driscoll said a fully equipped EOC was being designed that would withstand shaking. Responding to Ms. Austin, a CERPP member described the existing CERPP radio system, which worked very well; he anticipated something similar for the new building. Responding to Mayor Toben, Mr. Baron said there was a ham radio and CERPP radio at the EOC. Responding to Mayor Toben, Ms. Plunder confirmed that information had been compiled on all the ham operators in Town.

John Boice said CERPP's job was to collect all the information from the divisions and decide what the Town needed to know. However, when CERPP asked for things from the Town, it was important to know if the Town would help. Getting responses from the Town on requests that had been made had been a major problem.

CERPP and EPC members discussed communications and the fact that every CERPP division radio in Portola Valley could hear every other one so everyone knew what was going on. All of the neighborhoods were on the same channel. The EOC would act as the control station to avoid chatter and tell people when to respond. Chatter had been greatly reduced over the years, and messages received were prioritized and clear coming into the EOC. In exercises, hundreds of messages had come in from the divisions to the EOC with very little trouble.

A CERPP member said there were very few resources that could be sent out to the divisions in terms of fire trucks, ambulances, etc. One of the Council's major roles during a disaster was to be the communications hub to take those requests, prioritize them, and hand them to the County. That was frustrating for the CERPP division leaders because that took time. Once it was passed to the County, the County needed to respond to indicate whether something was available. That had to be passed back to the CERPP divisions. It took a lot of coordination with the agencies when there was no representative present within the EOC. Communication lines were well defined in some cases and not in others. Ms. Plunder added that the command and control function was something that people needed to be trained on. This was not intuitive.

The flow between incoming messages, prioritizing, and answers going out would be only as successful as whoever was in command was able to command and control. People needed to be trained specifically for that function.

Mr. Baron added that the police and fire department would be running their own operations. They did not want anybody calling in and saying they wanted something. The Town needed to have a liaison with the Fire District that the Town could use. Councilmember Davis said the Town needed a control person at the County as well. Councilmember Driscoll reiterated that this needed to be included in the agency agreements/contracts. Ms. Plunder said the EOC needed to be capable of triaging. Only the real crucial information would be fed up the line.

Ed Wells said the knowledge this committee had should be provided to the lowest levels and reinforced to the neighborhood divisions—particularly in Westridge. More volunteers were needed so that neighbors could cover for each other and give assignments among homeowners about what they needed to do to help each other. Neighborhood arrangements within their divisions needed to be reinforced.

Councilmember Merk said one of the most important things was to ensure that individual families and households were prepared. That was the first line of defense. The Town, County and State had made attempts to do that, but the Town needed to continue to make attempts to educate people on what they needed to do. When that took place, there was a natural progression to neighborhood organizations. In addition to the EOC training, the Council should try to get the individual households involved. When all the neighborhoods were involved, all the CERPP divisions would be involved. That pool of volunteers would grow.

Bill Lane said this Committee was in a very good position to share with the neighbors the fact that the Town would be much better prepared when there was a new Town Center and new multi-purpose room that would be designed structurally to give the highest level of walk-away safety. The Committee had an obligation to share this fact with the neighbors because there was still a group of people in the community who were not convinced that a new Town Center was needed. A lot of money still needed to be raised. He thanked the Committee for their work and the Council for holding this meeting.

With respect to Town staff, Councilmember Merk suggested budgeting for jumpsuits, boots, etc., in case the staff ended up staying here after a disaster. In terms of training, he said there were a number of classes offered through a number of agencies like the Red Cross and Fire District which Councilmembers and everyone should be taking. Mr. Carnes noted that CERPP was developing the “Personal Training Passport” where you wrote down the various levels of training you received, where you took it, and when.

Mayor Toben said there were five tasks the Town needed to undertake. First, redouble efforts to inform and equip individual households in the community to be prepared. He encouraged CERPP to assist. Second, ensure the handbook was current and clear. Third, conduct a field trip to understand where everything was. Fourth, continue to train staff and members of the Council. Fifth, ask the EPC to present a well-thought out budget to improved emergency preparedness. He thanked the Committee for their work.

#### ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 9:07 p.m.

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Mayor

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Town Clerk