

PORTOLA VALLEY TOWN COUNCIL SPECIAL JOINT MEETING WITH THE EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS COMMITTEE, NO. 869, OCTOBER 30, 2013

Mayor Richards called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance. Ms. Hanlon called the roll.

Present: Council: Councilmembers Maryann Derwin and Ted Driscoll; Mayor John Richards

EPC: Neighborhood Leaders Ann Kopf-Sill and Stuart Young; The Sequoias Emergency Leader Bud Trapp; Chair Ray Rothrock

Absent: Council: Vice Mayor Wengert

Neighborhood Leaders John Boice and Chris Raines; The Sequoias Medical Leader Diana Koin; CERPP Director Craig Taylor

Others: Nick Pegueros, Town Manager
Sharon Hanlon, Town Clerk

ORAL COMMUNICATIONS: None

REGULAR AGENDA

(1) Presentation: Emergency Preparedness Committee update by Ray Rothrock

Mr. Rothrock began his remarks by presenting the EPC's charter, approved by the Council in 2010: Ensure that the Town possesses adequate emergency response capabilities. In terms of duties and responsibilities, he said each Committee member brings particular strengths to the table. For instance, he said he and Chris Raines, Craig Taylor and Vista Verde resident Stuart Young, the EPC's newest member, are ham radio operators. Mr. Taylor also serves on the CERPP Board, Diana Koin is an MD and Ann Kopf-Sill is a marketing leader.

As Mr. Rothrock explained, the EPC's major functions, determined by its charter, include a variety of functions:

- **Outreach:** The EPC dispenses information via newsletters and the PV Forum, at events such as the Town Picnic and CERPP drills, through the Great Shake Out and Radio Field Day, and its new TIS AM radio broadcast system.
- **Medical Preparedness:** First aid supplies and equipment are located at Town Hall, The Sequoias a Stanford medical facility and the Sheriff's office, but equally important is the network of human assets – skilled people who know what to do with the equipment and supplies.

In response to a question from Councilmember Driscoll, it was explained that the Stanford facility is a primary-care facility that offers no emergency services and is not staffed to run 24/7.

Mr. Rothrock explained that EPC's goal is to have an established base-line of critical skills and assets required to provide basic first aid at Town Center (or other central location) for the duration of an emergency, be it up to a week or a month, he said. The elements of first aid, he continued, include:

- Personnel
- Equipment
- Supplies
- Water
- Food
- Shelter

A lot of volunteer hours have gone into reviewing inventory, making lists, noting locations, organizing logistics of getting items from one place to another and planning, Mr. Rothrock said. The EPC intends

to complete the plan in 2014, equip and supply a first-aid room at the EOC, drill and test the plan and demonstrate first-aid capability.

- **Communications:** Mr. Rothrock said the EPC is working on making its Travelers' Information Station (TIS) emergency AM radio system operational and designing and implementing a portable Emergency Operations Center (EOC) that can literally be carried in a suitcase – with the intention of discontinuing use of the EOC at the Priory. The Town Center EOC will remain, he said, but if it were down for any reason, they want to be able to set up anywhere with ham radios and CERPP communications.

As in any emergency, Mr. Rothrock said, the key to effective response is authorities able to make good decisions on the basis of good, real-time information. Communications is required to assemble Information as well. Emphasizing that in emergency situations, all dispatching would route through San Mateo County, Mr. Rothrock enumerated the several layers that comprise the Town's emergency communications resources. They include:

- The San Mateo County Office of Emergency Services (OES) in Redwood City
- A microwave link that connects the firehouse, San Mateo and the PV EOC (and was tested during the Great Shake Out)
- The Town's new AM 24/7 one-way radio broadcast station (one of thousands in the U.S.) with a range of about 3 kilometers except west of Skyline Boulevard; Mr. Rothrock said the Town procured the AM radio with a grant from the County, got a 10-year FCC TIS license on AM with 1680 kHz (call sign WQQA726), and now has its antenna installation completed
- CERPP's two-way radio system, also linked in with the Woodside Fire Protection District (WFPD); Woodside, Portola Valley and County EOC also have UHF and VHF radios
- Networks of amateur ham radio operations and increasingly popular General Mobile Radio Service (GMRS) radio operations; Mr. Rothrock described this as a high-powered family radio service that uses inexpensive radios, and there are now five repeaters in Town.
- The Town has five walkie-talkies, which are great for local communications if telephones are out of service

In response to a question from Councilmember Aalfs, Mr. Rothrock explained that although depending on atmospheric conditions, the Portola Valley radio can be heard as far away as downtown Palo Alto, the radio frequencies differ, and part of the strategy in turning on the radio is listening for a period of time to ensure that the channel is clear.

In response to a question about CERPP, Mr. Rothrock said some divisions are very active, but others are lacking in resources. He said it's important to figure out ways to make being a division leader an easier task than it now is.

Councilmember Driscoll said one of the toughest messages to get out to residents is about their personal responsibilities for sheltering in place. He suggested that the Town consider issuing "welcome packages" for new residents that include information about that.

- **Training:** The EPC has an active and ongoing program to inform residents about Red Cross, Woodside Fire Protection District (WFPD) and other training opportunities, in addition to conducting EOC drills and training as requested by CERPP, the Town and WFPD and providing training to new recruits and refreshers/updates for other volunteers.

- **Household Preparedness:** Every household should have at least a minimal stock of supplies to carry family members through an emergency period, and the EPC makes available base-case emergency supplies information and lists for households, focusing particularly on new residents. The EPC also explains effective procedures for updating and rotating inventory, lists items to consider keeping in Go Bags, and offers how-to guidance in the event of an emergency. Communication is the key, Mr. Rothrock said, and the EPC does it as often as possible at every level.
- **Governance/Jurisdiction:** Mr. Rothrock called this the “fuzzy part” of the EPC Charter. Because the County OES serves as the focal point, he said Committee members focus particularly on prioritizing what they can control, which is essentially what the Town wants. Its abilities also are restricted by the number of volunteers who are available to do what needs doing. In this framework, he said the EPC tries to define what it can do precisely, and be deep and effective in a few key areas rather than shallow across the spectrum.

Grading the EPC's achievements, Mr. Rothrock said the group earned an A- in outreach, A in communications and medical preparedness, B in governance, and C in training and household preparedness. He noted that medical preparedness, which took a huge leap forward thanks to a major emphasis this year, and governance are both work-in-progress areas.

In terms of communication, he said the AM radio system is ready to launch, with plans to create awareness being spearheaded by Ms. Kopf-Sill. There will be ongoing PV Forum postings, announcements in Town newsletters and *The Almanac*, road banners and refrigerator magnets. Mr. Rothrock also said he's talked with Public Works Director Howard Young about checking out the radio when out and about doing building inspections, because the EPC would like to know about any dead spots in reception. He noted that Mr. Young has been a tremendous help in getting the system up and running in a very cost-effective manner.

In addition to Mr. Young, Mr. Rothrock expressed appreciation for the EPC volunteer team – particularly Mr. Raines, who was largely responsible for getting the AM radio project started a couple of years ago – and thanked the Town Council, Town residents and WFPD for their support and input.

The EPC is preparing pre-recorded messages to air on the radio, Mr. Rothrock said. In addition to communicating emergency information, the Town also may use the system on occasion to transmit information about Town meetings.

Considering the antenna location, Mr. Pegueros mentioned some concerns about continuous broadcasting affecting staff's ability to do their work and the antenna's potential health impacts. He said they discussed the possibility of putting the system on a timer, shutting off at 9:00 a.m. and powering back on at 5:00 p.m., but as he indicated, that would defeat the purpose of 24/7 broadcasting. When asked about another location for the antenna, he replied that the only other potential installation site was the Sheriff's station, but it would have been much more expensive to put it there. Health concerns are very general; Mr. Pegueros said, and we don't know whether exposure might create any health problems, although no scientific data says it does. He noted that antennae are similar to cell towers; Mr. Rothrock clarified that the frequencies are very different (800 MHz for cell towers versus 1_MHz).

Mayor Richards applauded the EPC for doing a fabulous job. Councilmember Driscoll also thanked the EPC, pointing out that “if there's a thankless job in this Town, this is it.”

ADJOURNMENT [7:41 p.m.]

Mayor

Town Clerk