

BLOCK CAPTAIN MEETING 21-02

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

APRIL 15, 2021

MEETING MINUTES

1. Introduction

Block Captain Lead (BCL) Arlene Honbo welcomed all of the Block Captains, guests, and the First Responders. BCL Arlene Honbo indicated that today's meeting was intended to focus on the evacuation procedures with the First Responders and Question & Answer Session. BCL Arlene Honbo stated there were many important updates, and the agenda has been reorganized to focus on the First Responder's procedures, updates, and questions & answers. Next, BCL Arlene Honbo asked all attendees to introduce themselves.

The following were present:

Gene & Arlene Honbo, Zone 7, Block Captain Lead
Dorothy Vinter, Zone 7c
Kathleen Hughes, Zones 18a, 18b, & 18c
Marian Visco, Zone 5
Debra Shrader, Zone 13b
Charlie Raine, Zone 6
Annie Occhipinti, 34 Crest Road East
Lisa Kopenhefer, 14 Chuckwagon Road
Sandy Sherman, Zone 16a
Cliff Patterson, 22 Georgeff Road, Zone 15b
V'Etta Virtue, 4 Maverick Lane
Diane Montalto, Zone 4
Melissa McNabb, 11 Quail Ridge South
Bill Ruth, 2 Hummingbird Land
Judith Haenel, 31 Eastfield Drive
Tuba Ghannadi, 71 Eastfield Drive
Susan Collida, 5 Ringbit Road
Leah Mirsch, Support Group, City Council Member
Elaine Jeng, RH City Manager
Kristen Raig, RHCA Manager
Mark Grindle, RHCA Gate Supervisor
Brian Bennett, Battalion Chief, L.A. County Fire Dept.
Stephanie Grant, Administrative Clerk, Support

A. City's 2021-2022 Budget Proposal for BC Program

Elaine Jeng, RH City Manager, stated the City was entering into budget season and the City Council has been supportive of the Block Captain Program. She will be working very closely with the lead Block Captains to develop a budget for the Fiscal Year of July 1, 2021 to June 30, 2022. Last year, the Block Captain Program had an overall budget of \$30,000 for Emergency Preparedness and related items, such as training for staff. To date, only about half of the money has been spent and at the last meeting, the RH City Council approved the Home Hardening Videos.

B. PEPT – Peninsula Emergency Preparedness Task Force

Elaine Jeng, RH City Manager, provided an introduction of the Peninsula Emergency Preparedness Task (PEPT) that meets quarterly with the agencies on the Peninsula (School District, all 4 Cities, and some other organizations). The importance of the PEPT group is to coordinate emergency evacuation preparedness with other jurisdictions. Eventually, the City Manager will assign a Block Captain liaison to the PEPT, this will be developed and discussed in the future with the lead Block Captains.

C. Peninsula Public Safety Committee

City Manager Elaine Jeng, discussed the Peninsula Public Safety Committee (PPSC) that also meets quarterly and is comprised of the elected officials from the four Cities. This is an important group, because any concerns directed at PEPT comes from the PPSC. She wanted to introduce both groups because they will be playing a critical role in the Block Captain work.

D. Kristen Raig, RHCA Manager

Kristen Raig stated the Association recently purchased new equipment that will allow staff to conduct brush clearance along the trails. The more northern trails along Lower Si's and Blackwater Canyon have been leveled out by about 3 or 4 feet, or maybe even 6 feet. The new equipment contains an enormous "brush hound" that is similar to an enormous weed whacker with a metal blade that is able to grind and cutback heavier brush. The machine is able to pull and clear the vegetation and reduce the fuels, while mulching the materials onsite. The equipment is available all year long, and will no longer be contracted out. She also stated the Association will be heading into weed clearance season.

The Association will hold the annual chipping program on May 10th and 11th. Residents can put their green waste on the street, and a tree company will chip onsite. The residents can spread the chips on the property or the chips can be hauled away and residents shall have their green waste out by May 10th.

E. First Responders – L.A. Co. Fire Dept. & L.A. Co. Sheriff's Dept.

a. Brush Clearance Inspections – Update

Chief Bennett did not provide specific numbers, but he stated that he does check in daily with Station 56 regarding any problems. He also said that the annual inspections are continuing daily. According to Captain Weaver and Captain Benoit, compliance is great.

b. Hardening the Home Inspections – Wednesday, April 21

According to Chief Bennett, Trevor Moore, Forestry Division, has been doing a great job with the Hardening the Home Inspections and there has been positive feedback. Next week Chief Bennett will be meeting with a Block Captain to discuss the possibility of incorporating Hardening the Home with the annual inspections.

BCL Arlene Honbo announced new Block Captain Dustin McNabb will take over the lead for “Hardening the Home” from Gene Honbo. She stated the goal was to have at least 100 inspections this year, and as of last month, 34 inspections had been completed out of 690 homes. She also stated that Debra Shrader will provide an update on the video program. BCL Arlene Honbo encouraged Block Captains to get residents to sign up for the April 21, 2021 inspections and there were two slots still available.

Elaine Jeng, RH City Manager, provided data on Brush Fire Clearance:

669 Total Properties in RH
503 Inspections Done
255 Homes Cleared on Initial Inspection
248 410s Written
79 410s Cleared
169 410s in Process – Not Cleared

Next BCL Arlene Honbo discussed the draft evacuation procedure for the community, which was sent out two months ago and great feedback was received. Suggestions included:

- Reference brochure – “eye catching”
- Better maps - depicting the exit routes and the exits (clarify questions about the locked Crest Road Gate)
- Describe notification of residents
- Role of Block Captain

Evacuation Procedures for Residents - First Responders and Elaine Jeng

BCL Arlene Honbo asked Elaine Jeng, RH City Manager, to present the community evacuation procedures. Elaine displayed the chain of information in the event of an emergency

on the screen, a graphical depiction of how information will be distributed to the community. She presented information on the Incident Command Center (ICC) Communication, Rolling Hills Emergency Operations Center (EOC), and Evacuation Procedures. (See attachment.)

1. In the event of a major emergency, like a wildfire, an Incident Command Center post is established by Fire Department and joined by Sheriff, RH City Manager and Utilities. The goal is to have the minimum number of agencies focused on good communication. While initially set up “virtually”, from truck, home, etc., the ICC post may transition to a specified location if emergency is long term.
2. Emergency Operations Center may be established, if necessary, and is staffed by City Staff and RHCA participation. May be “virtual” at first, but will move to City Hall when possible. EOC functions are standardized and consistent throughout cities and the state. Information flow is between ICC and EOC, and EOC will push out information to Block Captains, if necessary.
3. First priority for a Block Captain is to take care of oneself and his/her family. Only if possible and appropriate, should Block Captains get in touch with residents. If a Block Captain knows of an incident or a specific need then the Block Captain should contact the City through the EOC.
4. How will EOC communicate with Block Captains? This issue is being addressed by a special project – Emergency Communication Project (see Question 14.)
5. If evacuation is necessary the FD will determine the outgoing routes for residents and incoming routes for the Fire Department. Given the proximity and location of a fire on the hill, the FD may not issue an Evacuation Warning and may immediately issue an Evacuation Order. There may not be enough time for an Evacuation Warning.
6. It is important for Block Captains and residents to sign up for Alert SouthBay.

After the overview was presented by Elaine Jeng with input from Chief Bennett, Arlene turned the meeting over for Questions and Answers.

Captain Powers of the LA County Sheriff’s Department did not attend the meeting, but he submitted printed answers to the questions (1-8). The answers from both Captain Powers and Chief Bennett are below. During the meeting, City Manager Elaine Jeng asked Battalion Chief Bennett the questions during a lightening round and he provided answers.

QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

Q1. The Rolling Hills Community Association automated the Crest Road East gate in 2020. Since the automation of the gate, how has the method of access for the First Responders change?

A1. Chief Bennett - Prior to the automation of the gates, the Fire Department used a universal padlock. When the padlock was eliminated, a keypad with what is similar to a “knox key” was installed and can be used by all engines and trucks. A code or “knox key” can be used for a temporary or permanent opening of the gate.

Q1a. Do the First Responders get out of the vehicle to open and close the gate?

A1a. Captain Powers - YES
Chief Bennett – Yes

A1b. Do the First Responders open/close the gate using a remote device?
A1b. Captain Powers - NO

Q2. How will residents be notified of an emergency evacuation?
A2. Captain Powers - DOOR KNOCKS, DOOR TO DOOR /PA SYSTEM

Q2a. What happens if I turn off my phone when I go to bed at night?
A2a. Captain Powers - PHONE IS NOT OPERABLE
Chief Bennett – No, the phone needs to be on to receive notifications

Q2b. Are Block Captains going to be notified separately or with all the residents?
A2b. Captain Powers - EVERYONE WILL BE NOTIFIED
Chief Bennett – Notification to BCs will be set up through you and the City of Rolling Hills through the EOC; BCs should have your own method of communication whether it be a group text, which is recommended.

Q2c. Will there be any specific communication regarding evacuation of large animals?
A2c. Captain Powers - NOT BY THE SHERIFF'S DEPT
Chief Bennett – Planning and preparation for the evacuation is highly recommended.

Q3. Rolling Hills is served by the Lomita Station and Fire Department Battalion 14. Do all First Responder vehicles from Lomita Station and Fire Department Battalion 14 have access through the Crest Road East gate?
A3. Captain Powers - YES
Chief Bennett – Yes, everyone has the same key for that gate, all of LA County.

Q4. In the event of an emergency, can vehicles from other Sheriff's Department station and other Fire Department Battalions enter the city using the Crest Road East gate?
A4. Captain Powers - YES
Chief Bennett - Yes

Q5. In the event of an emergency, and if the Fire Department requires the Crest Road East gate to be available for firefighting resources to be brought in through the said gate, how will the City and Rolling Hills Community Association be notified that the gate cannot be used by residents?
A5. Captain Powers - DIRECT COMMUNICATION AND POSSIBLE ROAD BLOCKS
Chief Bennett – Residents will not be told they cannot use the gate, but the FD will direct them to where they should go, to the closest gate. The residents will be directed to a safe direction.

Q6. In the event of an emergency, and the City is notified of the emergency, and absent of notification from First Responders that the Crest Road East gate will be used by First Responders, can the City and the Rolling Hills Community Association automatically open the said gate for residents to exit the City?

A6. Captain Powers - YES

Chief Bennett– Yes, it is the City’s gate, it is an evacuation gate. If the gate is opened up before the FD arrives, there is not a reason why residents are not able to use the gate. Most of the responding engines will come up through west side of Crest or Portuguese Bend.

Q7. Many residents want emergency lights by the Crest Road East gate so residents will know that the gate can be used as an exit. Do the first responders support installing emergency lights to signal when the Crest Road East gate is opened?

A7. Captain Powers - YES

Chief Bennett – Yes, because the area is dark but during an event, there will be a unit at the entrance to guide the residents.

Q8. The exit from Crest Road East gate is only one lane. What happens if a horse trailer or car blocks the exit, which would prevent residents from using in an emergency. Many residents are in favor of widening the Crest Road East exit back to two-lanes. Do the first responders support widening the exit back to two-lanes?

A8. Captain Powers - YES

Chief Bennett – Yes, the road would be better if it were wider. In the event if there is only one lane, then the FD will make one lane work.

Q9. In the event of an ICC order to leave the city and evacuate, then everyone must evacuate, including Block Captains. Will residents be told which way to leave or just evacuate?

A9. According to Chief Bennett, part of his job is to plan the outgoing evacuation routes for residents and plan the incoming routes for outside responding companies that are outside Palos Verdes. It is all part of his planning for the incidents. Once a determination has been established to send residents out and first responders in to their designated areas, then he will coordinate with the City Manager or the Sherriff’s representative. Then Alert LA, South Bay Alert, and the PA system will inform residents how to evacuate and which routes to use.

Q10. If someone needs help evacuating animals, would they contact the City?

A10. According to Elaine Jeng, preparation is one of the purposes of our meetings. Those who have animals or other type special needs should pre-plan ahead in the event of an emergency. Pre-planning is encouraged, and it is important to know the type, size, number, and what actions need to be taken in the event of an emergency. Resources should be reserved for those who do not have any anticipation or are in need of dire help at that time of an emergency. In the event of an emergency and assistance is needed, of course no one will be turned away and resources will be available.

Q11. Would it be possible for the page of evacuation procedures to be sent to our zones to demonstrate exit organization?

A11. Yes, and BCL Arlene Honbo stated that materials will be sent out to everyone so the materials can be forwarded to your zones. All shared materials will be distributed to Block Captains.

Q12. What is a 410? Is it referring to a form?

A12. Chief Bennett – A 410 is the Fire Department’s numeric identification of a brush inspection form. A 410 form is just for inspections of a business. A 410-B is for an inspection

of business or home for brush. The “B” is for brush. The 410-B is the form that is used for the June through July Home inspections, and now it will be used for the roadways as well.

Q13. There’s a group of volunteers through the LA County Animal Control that assists with evacuations in wildfires, how can I get in touch with that group if assistance is needed?

A13. Chief Bennett - There may be contact numbers through Ready Set Go Pamphlet for large animal assistance and preparation. Also, the LA County website has resources to connect local people.

Q14. Communication is an important topic, currently there are no walkie-talkies or PA System. Should the Block Captains have a WhatsApp? What if the internet goes down?

A14. BCL Arlene – Not having a PA system is an ongoing concern for Block Captains. If an event were to occur, then there would be dependence communicating by the cell phones, landline, and internet. The Block Captains should decide to if we should use NextDoor or set up group texts. In addition, Elaine Jeng is making progress on an Emergency Communication Project, which will address 2-way communication path for block captains and residents.

1. Emergency Communication Project Status: City Manager Elaine Jeng is in the process of evaluating a radio system with technology capable of overcoming the terrain, line of sight, and programmable. Staff put out a Request for Proposal (RFP) to hire a consultant to provide expert services to find a set of radios to for the EOC and Block Captains to communicate. Elaine received a proposal and interviewed a company called HQE that works in the defense industry and communications.

Block Captain Clint Patterson expressed his concerns in the event not having any cell service, internet, or power. Captain Bennett responded to his concerns, in the event of a wide spread power failure, the Fire Department would use the PA System and deputies would physically knock-on doors. Part of the Fire Department’s Checklist is to ensure the residents receive the alerts from Alert Southbay. The Fire Department will also be relying on the EOC during the event of an evacuation to communicate and distribute information to the Block Captains and residents.

Regarding questions of communication in the event of an evacuation, BCL Arlene stated Block Captains will be asked to work with the expert consulting firm. The consultants will be making recommendations to Elaine, and the recommendations will be presented to the Block Captains before anything is adopted. This is an objective for this year, and it will be an ongoing process to find a solution.

Block Captain Judith Haenel stated that Block Captains should purchase walkie-talkies, sirens, or megaphones in the case of an emergency and it would be good to have at least something. She asked if the City would purchase them and if there were funds available. City Manager Elaine Jeng responded by stating, the City is planning to work with the consultants. BCL Arlene mentioned that Block Captains have the option of purchasing walkie-talkies on their own.

BCL Gene Honbo provide an update on the Hardening the Home Video, a vendor has been hired to help develop a 6–10-minute video and the project will begin on May 1, 2021. They are looking for two homes to film the video and at least one of the homes should have a stable.

BCL Arlene asked for Block Captains and residents to sign up for the Hardening the Home with Trevor Moore on April 21, 2021 and sign up for the South Bay Alert.

NEXT MEETING VIA ZOOM: June 17, 2021 at 10 a.m.