

BLOCK CAPTAIN ANNUAL ZONE MEETING 2020

OCTOBER 6 & 8, 2020

SUMMARY OF MEETING MINUTES

1. INTRODUCTIONS

October 6, 2020 – Block Captain Lead (BCL) Arlene Honbo introduces our special guests; Chief Hale, Trevor Moore from the of the Fire Dept’s. Forestry Division, Elaine Jeng, City Manager, Kristen Raig, RHCA Manager, Captain Powers

October 8, 2020 - Block Captain Lead (BCL) Arlene Honbo introduces our special guests; Battalion Chief Brian Bennett representing the Fire Dept., Deputy Sousa representing the Sheriff’s Dept., Trevor Moore of the Fire Dept. Forestry Division, Elaine Jeng, City Manager

2. IMPORTANT UPDATES

Elaine Jeng, City Manager

- **CWPP**
July 2020 the City adopted the CWPP. A major benefit is that Insurance companies look favorably up on cities who have adopted this plan with regards to annual costs.
- **Palos Verdes Land Conservancy Fire Fuel Abatement**
The City Council has contributed funds to have the Palos Verdes Land Conservancy to do some fire fuel abatement in the areas closest to the borders of Rolling Hills. This area can be seen if walking down the trail from the Fire Department and hugging the borders is where most of the work will be concentrated. We have gone two seasons of fire fuel abatement there and the City Council has funded/paid for 3 years of maintenance, called phase 1 and phase 2 work. Phase 1 began in 2019 and was completed in August 2020, phase 2 will begin in April 2021, with the intention of eradicating mustard plant within the 3-year time frame, therefore, significantly reducing or eliminating the major fire fuel source in and around this area of the preserve. Also, this area has been the point of origin of the last 2 wildfires within the City. City Council is considering funding further abatement in a 3rd area which would be called phase 3; however, this 3rd area is not known, at this time.
- **Evaluation of the Evacuation Routes by the Fire Department**
The Fire Department and the City have been working together evaluating the evacuation routes throughout the City. These routes are Portuguese Bend Road, Crest Road and Eastfield Drive, which are the major streets that run through the City and reach each of the 3 gates.

The City has asked the Fire Department to provide their expert opinion of 1) how the City is doing in this area? and 2) are the evacuation routes prepared to receive their resources? and 3) do routes allow the residents to exit simultaneously, in case of a fire? Elaine is awaiting the results from this evaluation and after consideration from the City, she will publish the results to the community.

From the recent fires throughout the state there have been lessons learned and evacuation routes and proper maintenance for fire safety are very important; the City continues to work with the Fire Dept. on these items. She received data earlier in the week and is working with a small group of Block Captains to evaluate the data that were received from the Fire Dept. She will share that data with the community in a few weeks.

Kristen Raig, RHCA Manager

- **Crest Road East Gate**

The Association is still working on the locked gate; unfortunately, there was some miscommunication with the county inspector and SCE with work for the installation of the keypad. SCE has scheduled work to power up the new utility pole on the north side of the street near the locked gate. The electronics on the gate have been installed and just need to be hooked up. The cameras are operating, but once the utility pole is powered up the license plate recognition software/cameras will be operational with live feed to the main gate. The locked gate has been manually operational during this restructuring and is and has been accessible by the Fire Department and the Sheriff's Department. The previous issue was that the chain was hooked up to the opener but that has been disconnected to make entry easier for the First Responders. It is anticipated that a date will soon be announced that the locked gate is fully operational and functioning automatically.

Arlene reported that, the RHCA will soon be publishing a policy outlining how the Crest Road E gate will be used in the event of an emergency or an evacuation. She also re-enforced that the association is working diligently to get the gate fully automated so the City can have a 4th exit route.

- **Fire Fuel Management Standards**

The RHCA has been working on a soon to be adopted "Fire Fuel Management Standards" which will be a guide for homeowners on how to address, maintain and/or rehabilitate vegetation on their properties, in order, to provide/create a defensible space in case of a fire. The standard also addresses places that are unique to the community, such as bridle trails, canyon slopes, long driveways, and areas beyond 200 feet, which may not be addressed by the Fire Department recommendations. It explains how to thin vegetation on slope areas without creating possible erosion/slide areas; how to trim hedges without compromising privacy 3) and includes useful tools that work in conjunction with the "Hardening the Home" Inspections provided by Trevor Moore, LA Co F.D., Forestry Division.

The RHCA Board is currently reviewing the Fire Fuel Management Standards "draft" but is expected to be adopted within the next two board meetings and then will publish the policy.

The RHCA has also been working on thinning vegetation along the 3 major evacuation routes and road easements. The association has adopted a policy to cut the vegetation back 8 feet along these 3 roads. Phase 1 are the bridle trails; Phase 2 will consist of contacting homeowners and requesting compliance with

the new Fire Fuel Management Standard. Currently, their primary focus will be on the 3 major evacuation routes and streets that are the most heavily populated.

Captain Powers, Lomita Sheriff's Department

So. Cal. Fires and Civil Unrest

- Recently, the Sheriff's Dept's. focus has been on the current fires and civil unrest. His department worked 12 hour shifts until these events became manageable and calmed down quite a bit. We still must stay vigilant and observant, keeping our eyes and ears open for everything. He states, their practice has always been if you "see" something, then "say" something. He emphasized that if you see something out of the ordinary please call them and report that to them. Even though he is not a firefighter; a defensible space can be viewed from the perspective of crime prevention or problem solving. Fire is a problem and is something we want to minimize or reduce the probability of a fire igniting or spreading. This is not really about enforcement but about cooperation with the partnerships we have created.

He mentions that another common question is about evacuation routes and evacuation strategies. He is repeatedly asked what is the evacuation route? His response is that he does not have an answer to that because he does not know where the fire is. When it comes to evacuation routes and evacuation strategies, they respond by going to the command post with the fire department and start strategizing immediately. That is when they start to figure out where the fire is at, what is burning, which direction is it blowing, what are the weather conditions. There are a variety of factors that come into play, so the last thing he/they want to do is evacuate you into an area that the fire department is using as source when responding to the fire. That would lead to traffic congestion. There are a variety of strategies and factors that come into play. He knows he is not answering the question because he does not have the answer and there is a reason for that. He hopes that he has explained but if anyone has any questions about this, he welcomes them.

Captain Powers also wants to remind everyone that these meetings are part of preparedness, and practice putting valuables in the car to see how long this takes.

Chief Hale, LA Co. Fire Department

Chief Hale was asked if there were any evacuation issues or concerns that were reported from the 2009 fires that the City could learn from. Currently, Chief Hale reports that it has been a busy fire season and with the anticipation of the Santa Ana's this season, he re-enforces that brush clearance should occur year-round.

Chief Hale clarified the importance of signage, identifying home with a pool on the property, especially for first responders, the purpose knowledge for protection or assistance with evacuations, or knowing the location of a defensible home.

As a reminder, the best practice is always to evacuate as early as possible and to evacuate the largest animals first.

Battalion Chief Brian Bennett

He reports that there were approximately 1000 fire fighters participating in the local fires including the fireman from the City. Palos Verdes peninsula it has been fairly quiet in terms of fires, which has allowed the City's fireman to assist other cities.

He also participated in the evacuation route survey and has provided feedback. He mentioned he went through the City 3 or 4 times, over the past couple of weeks, and Elaine received what their basic recommendations. He says, from his perspective the evacuation routes look very good, this comes from his 30 years of experience and says the City has done a very good job. The evacuation routes are sufficiently maintained, but there are some small areas that still can be improved, but overall, the routes look very good. An important thing you want to remember is that the Fire Dept. will be there to will help with the evacuation, directing traffic away from the fire(s) at all time. They will be working in conjunction with the Sheriff's Dept. and make the best decision for the best route to direct the residents out of the City and hope any/all evacuations result in a regular drive out of the exits, Crest Road, Portuguese Bend Road and/or Eastfield Drive.

Deputy Sousa

He reinforces Chief Bennett's statement that they will be working together to decide the best route for evacuation and guide the residents out.

3. MAIN FOCUS OF THIS MEETING

BCL Arlene Honbo stated that the focus now will be on "Harding the Home" and would also like to remind everyone that in 2019 the topic for the resident zone meeting was "Emergency Preparedness" and preparing your survival kits. At that meeting they distributed resident kits which included good information like the "Ready Set Go" brochure that is published by the fire department, as well as earthquake survival information. If anyone has not yet received their resident information kits you can call City Hall at 310-377-1521 or you can call your Block Captain (BC). If you do not know who your BC is there is a list of current zones that have a BC and zones that need a BC and are on the City's website.

Trevor Moore, Forestry Department & BCL Arlene – Narrating the Slide Show Presentation

"Hardening the Home" - Slide Presentation

BCL Arlene now begins her presentation with the assistance of Trevor Moore from the Forestry Division., She mentions that the materials provided from the Fire Department and from Trevor Moore from Forestry Department can all be found on the Rolling Hills website. Attachments for this topic include a Hardening the Home brochure, a brochure on reducing wildfire risks in the home ignition zone as well as an assessment guide form, which is a report solely for the homeowner. These attachments are on the BC meeting and agenda page which can be downloaded.

Arlene emphasized the fire department knows there is an increased risk of a home burning down from "fire embers". We live in a unique setting which is considered a "high fire severity zone". One thing we can do is have an inspection to get recommendations from the fire department on how can improve our defense of our home against a wildfire. We already get an annual brush inspection but this different Hardening the Home inspections focus on the home and what you can do to improve its defensibility. The inspection report is on the website and is called the "Home Ignition Zone Structure Assessment Guide"; it has several questions and is filled out by the fire department, in our case by Trevor Moore. He will review any recommendations that fit into any of these categories and will leave all the paperwork with the homeowner. If you do not want to sign up for an inspection this form can still be a guide, it includes the categories that were mentioned, such as eaves, chimney's, immediate landscape areas close to the home, etc. This inspection is only for the outside of the home and not the inside.

Trevor Moore shared what type of questions he goes through during a home inspection. He mentions it is very simple, you check the appropriate boxes. There is a question that asks "where is the home in relationship to the wind", in other words, which direction is the wind coming from when we have wind events during ember driven fires during windy months like October & November when we get the Santa Ana winds. We should think about where the embers are coming from, which including the effect of the topography on the side of the house the winds are coming from, such as, do we have a steep slope that will influence the fire, like throw embers towards your home. The house can act like a catcher's mitt on the side of the home where the embers are coming towards so you may want to focus on that part of the home by clearing anything that may be flammable at least 5 feet away from the home, they talk about the roof, the rain gutters, and the eaves as some of the crucial locations that will receive those embers. By clearing out debris from the rain gutters, debris off the roof, and by replacing screens with the recommended 1/8th inch screens on attic vents and crawl spaces where the winds will push those embers into your home and possibly ignite it. This will give your house a better chance to survive a wind event fire. He states that he is part of prevention and by conducting these inspections all over the county he educates individuals to use this fire prevention tool on how to protect your house and help it survive and give it a better chance to survive. That they then in turn, also educate and provide the tools for others to do the same. He emphasizes again the inspection is not a punitive and he is not there in an enforcement capacity, but to provide information and knowledge, so this is something you can continue to do on your own to help give your house a better chance.

Gene Honbo added that the inspection takes no more than 45 minutes, using this inspection checklist. He teaches people like the BC's and the BC's can then share this information with their neighbors and then share with each other, but this is also something you can do on your own or together as a community, however, he is available to help the community for the inspections.

Trevor Moore has been to our community twice before to conduct the home inspections and approximately a dozen residents that have participated. Arlene's presentation includes photos of Trevor identifying by pointing out items during the inspection. One photo shows a resident whose hibiscus plant is very close to the roof line, which could result in the "ladder" should if the plant were to catch on fire. His recommendation is to trim the hibiscus back to a clearance of up to 3 feet down from the roof line, as shown in the next photo. In addition, Trevor will also point out any other vulnerabilities, such as under the eaves like vents, since many of the homes, still have a ¼ inch mesh screen over the vent's attic crawl spaces. He recommends the ¼ inch mesh be replaced with mesh not to exceed a 1/8th mesh, which will better prevent embers from entering these spaces. The RHCA and City Hall were also inspected and following that inspection, Kristen Raig, RHCA Manager contacted a vendor called "Brand Guard Vents", whose vents are designed to specifically trap embers. She has information about their vents available at the Community Association or you can go to their website: <https://www.brandguardvents.com/vent-products>. As you can imagine there are many products available to help with the "Hardening of the Home" objective.

In summary, the provided recommended fixes, some may be quick and easy, others may be larger and possibly more costly. Also, there are things that we can do to improve communications with signage, as well. The quick fixes mentioned during the "Hardening the Home" presentation, that clearing your rain gutters at least twice a year, removing leaves/debris from the roof, cutting back vegetation that provides a "ladder" event, where the plants/vegetation could catch fire and potentially ignite the eaves. In addition, removing any unnecessary flammable objects that are near the home. Such as, having a trellis located very close to the home, it would be recommended that it be moved further away from the home. These quick fixes, residents can take care of on their own, on an ongoing basis, perhaps twice a year. Larger fixes include trimming of trees, any kind of roof repair. Arlene stated that she was surprised to find out that having a leaky roof creates a vulnerability for embers to enter and ignite the roof. Emphasizing any kind of roof repair required should be taken care of. Also, remodeling with safer materials maybe more costly but might be a more effective fix, for the long run. Better

signage, identifying homes that have pools, pool pumps, horses on property, or the resident has special needs, is also recommended. It is also important that the homes address sign is clearly marked and not obstructed by bushes/branches. signage if your home has pool or pool pumps. The Caballeros have done a great job recommending that the horse owners mark their mailbox indicating that a horse on the property. These are the kinds improvements residents can do on their own, that helps firefighters to either assist properties with large animals. Homes with pool and pool pumps signage helps firefighters easily identify these homes as more defensible.

Arlene states that if you are interest in getting a home inspection, but it is not mandatory, this is really more to help the community and the materials used by Trevor are on the BC's website. However, if you are interested in having Trevor come to your home for an inspection, please contact Kirsten Orlor at 310-377-1521, who is from the City and is administratively supporting the BC program. She will coordinate the schedule with Trevor to have several homes inspected on the same day, he typically has time to inspect about 8 to 10 homes on the scheduled day. As Gene pointed out the inspection takes about 30 to 45 minutes, at most. Kirsten will publish the date Trevor will be available and schedule residents upon request. As mentioned earlier several residents that have gone through this inspection and we have received positive feedback from them, including from Leah Mirsch from the City Council, Ty Bobit from the Community Association, as well as some BC's and residents. This is some of the feedback we have received, a resident said, "I was afraid I would be written up", but as Trevor reinforced, this inspection is not punitive, but for informational purposes only. In addition, all the materials, documents with recommendation stay with the homeowner and no one else is given this information. Another resident said, "I have two potential "Catcher's Mitts" on my home and learned what I could do to make those areas safer. Another comment was "I learned that I could do this myself" going forward, maybe twice a year, once after the rains and another time when it is most dry. Another comment was "I now have more peace of mind if I am not home during an emergency, because I know I have done some things to make my home safer. Lastly, Arlene would like to point out, that spreading the information and word will hopefully encourage our community to be a safer community. In conclusion, there has been some talk "anecdotally" should this be something the entire community embraces and participates in, it might be something the City could appeal to some insurance companies to see if we could receive credit, so to speak, having the requires steps to "Harden the Home". This is just food for thought for our community.

4. Questions and Answers

- Q. Would a fire drill be helpful for residence for preparation of an evacuation, also could this help to identify any bottlenecks?
- A. Possibly, but it would take some time to plan before conducting one, it also depends the cooperation of the residents.
- Q. Is it a concern if tree branches are resting on utility lines and/or large branches hanging over the streets?
- A. Branches overhanging the street(s) are considered city property and not private and since electrical lines are involved it fall under SCE's per view and should be reported to their "Dead Vegetation" department. SCE will send a team out to cut/trim the overhanging branches.
- Q. Bandwidth has been a problem for residence during the "stay at home" order, resulting from COVID-19, which created a significant increase of individuals working from home, resulting in an increase of internet traffic, reducing the available bandwidth. Causing problems with access, speed and resulting in

frequently lost connections. So, should an actual emergency requiring evacuations to occur what would be the impact of this?

A. It is difficult to determine the impact should an evacuation be required in the future and since this involves the utility companies. Mrs. Jeng and other peninsula city managers have been addressing this issue with the utility companies, primarily with Cox Cable. Primarily since Covid-19 and the “Stay at Home Order” and have many more people work from home than previously had, in addition kids who now attend school from home, which has significantly increased internet traffic resulting in bandwidth issues (i.e. dropped communications). Mrs. Jeng’s priority is and has been to establish a direct line of communications with the V.P. of Communications, Mr. Henshel, who has been excellent to work with assisting with goal of establishing and receiving a constant stable connection for the City. So, should there be an emergency, which is difficult to foresee, however being able to have a constant and stable connection on a day to day basis, the City should be in a better situation with respect to communication abilities within the City if and when there is an emergency.

Q. What is the purpose of posting a “Pool” decal on or near the address sign?

A. The First Responders are not necessarily familiar with each resident and what is on their property. Therefore, decals provide notification of resources that can assist in fire prevention/protection of property.

Q. In case of a power outage during an emergency evacuation, how will communications occur to and from the City’s residents to/from the emergency responders (ER’s)?

A. Implementation of Emergency Communications has been delayed. The initial efforts of the use of walkie talkies were found to be ineffective due to the impediment the terrain preventing a direct line of sight (trees, hills, the terrain), required for clear transmission. Elaine has investigated what the rest of the peninsula is using in case of an emergency. She has also contacted an amateur radio club to see if they could assist us in identifying what type of radio would be best, for our use. It was also discovered that the radio we have, needs to be programmed, which is being researched. Once they are programmed, they can then be tested again for their effectiveness within the City. This will help the City determine the best model & type of radio to be purchased. This project is still on going. However, currently the City does have an Emergency Notification system but does assume power to be in place. Outside the emergency notification systems such as Blackboard Connect, residents can sign up on the City’s website, Alert South bay and E-notify me – notify via cellular data. It is suggested that residents sign up with multiple numbers.

Elaine is reviewing data available from the recent siren study conducted by Malibu. Depending on the finding from the study, she may present them to City Council with similar ideas in mind.

Q. Pool & Horse Decals can be obtained where?

A. Pool decals can be obtained from the community association, horse decals are available from Caballeros.

Q. Should an evacuation be required at this time would/could the Crest Rd E. gate be opened immediately.

- A. Currently, the First Responders & the Association's Staff only have the key that unlocks the gate. The automation of the gate is in the last stages of completion before it is fully operational. However, once the gate is fully operational, the main gate will have a button, allowing them to the gate on demand.

Meeting(s) Adjourned

The Annual BC Zone Meetings Adjourned:

October 6th at 11:20 a.m.

October 8th at 7:11 p.m.

2020 Annual Zone Meeting(s) Attendance

Attendance on October 6th - 25 individuals

Attendance on October 8th - 28 individuals

The next scheduled BC meeting is February 18, 2021 at 10 – 11 a.m. via Zoom