

# BLOCK CAPTAIN MEETING 20-05

## NOVEMBER 5, 2020

### MEETING MINUTES

#### 1. INTRODUCTIONS

Block Captain Lead (BCL) Arlene Honbo welcomed the attendees. There were some technical issues with the zoom meeting link. BCL Arlene Honbo re-sent the link to all participants and delayed the meeting start for ten minutes. In the interim, City Manager Jeng thanked Trevor Moore of the Los Angeles County Fire Department for his recommendations regarding landscaping at City Hall. Mr. Moore acknowledged that City Hall sets the example for residents. BCL Gene Honbo added that he feels a lot safer after implementing recommendations from the inspection, including removing plants and installing mesh. BCL Gene Honbo mentioned he provided labor and materials costs to Trevor as an example of the cost for other residents. BCL Arlene Honbo stated that she will share more information with residents. Trevor emphasized that it's not terribly expensive to take these precautions, and that the benefits are substantial in case of an ember cast-type fire. Mr. Moore suggested residents visit this website: [www.defensiblespace.org](http://www.defensiblespace.org) for cost-effective measures residents may take to harden their homes. He stated the financial investment isn't that big.

BCL Arlene Honbo indicated that this is the last Block Captain meeting of the year, and the main purpose of the meeting today is to get some feedback on the 2020 goals and to gather input for the establishment of 2021 goals. Arlene introduced the following special guests:

- Elaine Jeng, City Manager, City of Rolling Hills
- Kristen Raig, Rolling Hills Community Association
- Trevor Moore, Los Angeles County Fire Department, Forestry Division
- Kevin Johnson, Emergency Evacuation Route Assessment
- Deputy Sousa, LA County Sheriff's Department

#### 2. IMPORTANT UPDATES

- a. Elaine Jeng, RH City Manager

**Nature Reserve Funding Allocation:** City Manager Jeng indicated City Council is contemplating allocating additional monies to the Nature Preserve to fund more fire fuel abatement. If you recall, last November/October timeframe, the first phase of our investment was completed. In that first phase, City Council also approved three additional years of maintenance. This year in 2020, City Council approved a second phase of work and allocated funding for three additional years of maintenance. In 2020, we completed the maintenance of Phase 1 and completed work on Phase 2. In 2021, we will do Year 2 of maintenance work in Phase 1 and Year 1 of maintenance work on 2020. There is a map on the City's website that identifies areas of the Nature Preserve closest to the Rolling Hills community that where investments were made. The City Council is looking to make an investment along the border of the Nature Preserve. The first and second phases are the two closest to the Fire Station 56, and then we will make our way down south. There is a possible

allocation coming up in 2021. The City Council wants to see how our investments have fared before investing more money.

**Automation of Crest Gate:** City Council has taken an interest in automating Crest Gate. This gate is under the control of the Rolling Hills Community Association (RHCA). The Block Captains and the Fire Department have pushed to automate this gate for safe evacuation in the event of an emergency. The automation is progressing slowly and the City Council would like to speed up the process. This item will be heard at the November 23, 2020 City Council meeting.

**Canyons:** The canyon is one area to focus on in the future. City Manager Jeng asks if the members would be interested in starting an incentive program much like what we do with underground utilities. Back in September, the City approved a policy that will contribute \$2,000 in funds to residents who want to underground a utility pole if they take on the expense. If a resident owns a property with a large canyon and wants to abate fire fuel, perhaps the City can start a similar program.

**Michael Jenkins, City Attorney opinion on Block Captain Liability:** In response to BCL Arlene Honbo's request, City Manager Jeng indicate that she discussed the issue of Block Captain liability with City Attorney Michael Jenkins who opined that the Government Code exempts volunteers from liability. City Manager Jeng will share the memo with residents who request the information. Rae Walker mentioned that the Release of Liability should be released to all residents. BCL Arlene Honbo suggested that this could be mentioned in the Blue Newsletter. City Manager Jeng said she will look into ways of announcing this to the community.

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

BCL Arlene Honbo stated that we are still in Fire Season and introduced LA County Fire Department Chief Hale who agreed it's been the busiest season to date. Chief Hale stated that Fire Season is not over, and advised everyone to stay alert and be aware. He cited recommendations for brush clearance in terms of the evacuation. Chief Hale stated that we need to roll up our sleeves and get down to working on what needs to be done with the City and the RHCA. He emphasized that everybody needs to be responsible to ensure that they are safe. Chief Hale closed by encouraging everyone to keep the momentum we have moving forward. Arlene reminded everyone to read the Ready!Set!Go! Pamphlet. Chief Hale echoed her comments and suggested using it as a guide to the decision-making process. He added that one of recent fires started from a chain dragging the ground and said it is important to be mindful.

BCL Arlene Honbo asked for input from Deputy Sousa, LA County Sherriff's Department. Deputy Souza offered a reminder this is the season for stealing packages and porch pirates are ramping up.

Arlene indicated that Trevor Moore will be coming out November 10, 2020 and she reminded residents to ask for an inspection, and invite neighbors to observe as an example. Arlene indicated that the abatement measures they took were not cost-prohibitive.

### 3. UPDATE ON EVACUATION ROUTE SURVEY BY THE FIRE DEPARTMENT

**Evacuation Routes Survey:** BCL Arlene Honbo asked City Manager Jeng to start with important updates from the City's perspective. City Manager Jeng stated that as of November 5, 2020, the City received 132 responses to the Evacuation Routes Survey and that it would be open from now until November 13, 2020. She added that City staff will be putting out more campaign material to encourage more responses. In comparison, to about a year ago, when we did the community survey as a milestone in prepping for the Community Wildfire Protection Plan, we had nearly 300 survey responses and she is hoping that we will do similar or better and gain more responses. City Manager Jeng added that once the survey closes, City staff will analyze the results. A small group convened to develop questions for the survey, and City Manager Jeng will circle back to the group to analyze the data and then ask the Fire Department to join in that effort. Next, City Manager Jeng stated that the City will release the entire set of data to the general public.

City Manager Jeng continues to work with the Fire Department and road easements are the topic of the day. She underscored the importance of working with the experts about what would be safe for life and property. City Manager Jeng added that the Fire Department with Chief Hale, Kevin Johnson and Trevor Moore have educated the City. It is important to have a full understanding of the evacuation survey before engaging the community.

### 4. 2021 GOALS

#### a. Debrief of 2020 Goals

1. CWPP was adopted July 2020
2. Evacuation Routes
3. Emergency Communication Devices
4. Education and communication for residents

BCL Arlene Honbo wanted feedback on: 1) how successful/unsuccessful we were in meeting the 2020 Goals, and 2) what should the goals for the Block Captain Program be in 2021. BCL Arlene Honbo opened the discussion for comments and feedback from the group. She asked if we had to give ourselves a grade, what would it be.

Block Captain (BC) Judith Haenel started the feedback session. She commented that she picked up extra zones and has visited several homes. Many residents are appreciative of the program. Judith stated that she would give us a really great grade since nothing else existed before. BC Kathleen Hughes stated she would give Elaine and Arlene an "A" for all of their effort. On the downside, Kathleen feels discouraged and feels trapped because of the Crest Road East Gate. She concluded that change seems very difficult. BC Michael Sherman agreed with BC Hughes. He indicated that those who are disinterested are the very people who will complain the loudest if they lose everything because of not following the recommendations of Trevor Moore. BC Nicole Tangen expressed that half of her zone is non-responsive and she emphasized the importance of personalizing things can make a difference by sharing positive stories with the community rather than leading with fear. She concluded that personal stories resonate with people. BC Ross Smith commented on his zone stating that some residents are uninterested.

## 5. CONTINUING/NEW GOALS FOR 2021

BCL Arlene Honbo discussed potential goals for 2021:

1. Emergency Communication and Education/Training
2. Evacuation Routes
3. Assisting Residents with Special Needs

BCL Arlene Honbo asked for feedback and prioritization. BC Kay Lupo commented that she saw a list of things for evacuation if one had 15 minutes or 30 minutes on the Nextdoor app. She thought it was a great list and suggested including the list in the Blue Newsletter. BC Penni Smith commented that she liked City Manager Jeng's comment regarding the proposal for canyon incentives. BC Penni Smith said residents have no idea what is going on in the canyon or what they are responsible for. She suggested that some information from the City could educate and guide the residents and will be beneficial. BC Judith Haenel indicated that there are some hearing impaired residents and recommends using megaphones to communicate with them. Waiting for the Fire or Police Departments to notify these residents of an evacuation might be too late. BC Rae Walker underscored the importance of considering animals during an emergency evacuation as it can be dangerous without preparation. BC Rae Walker added that it is an especially dangerous situation if your children don't know. She suggests training and identifying gathering points for animals and believes it will be a good cautionary action to take before a problem arises. There are so many types of animals (pigs, chickens, ducks, turtles) and they all have unique needs.

BCL Arlene Honbo mentioned that there are some zones that don't have Block Captains. She has emergency kits that she can distribute. BC Judith Haenel volunteered to take over Eastfield and work with Marion and Bill Ruth as the Block Captain for that particular area. She stated that there are 12 zones that still do not have Block Captains and that is 174 houses. BC Judith Haenel wants to get ER packs out to those houses that don't have Block Captains. BCL Arlene Honbo agreed to work with BC Judith Haenel on distribution.

BC Ed Swart mentioned that there may be homeless people moving up the hill and settling themselves into the City and it can be dangerous for them in light of fire hazards in the canyon in addition to safety issues. He recommends neighbors look around for this in the area. BCL Arlene Honbo stated that the LA County Sheriff's should be contacted if necessary.

City Manager Jeng added that with respect to wildfires, the City Council is considering banning smoking in the public places and also along the road easements. There is a proposed ordinance that will likely be presented at the November 23, 2020 City Council meeting. She also mentioned that the City received a grant from FEMA and the California Office of Emergency Services to underground utilities from Crest Road East gate inward toward the community along Crest Road East and terminates near Eastfield. The project is about \$1.6 million. The City will use matching funds from the Rule 20A credit from SCE. Separately, there is another undergrounding project the City applied for along Eastfield at the top of Crest Road. It is over \$2 million in cost and again the City is using Rule 20A credit to match funds. These are efforts that work in hand-in-hand to mitigate wildfire hazards.

BCL Arlene Honbo reminded everyone that we are still in Fire Season, so stay alert. She will be assisting with delivery of ER kits to residents and invites other volunteers to participate by contacting her or BC Judith Haenel. BCL Arlene Honbo indicated that she is dismayed by seeing cigarette 'butts' on her walks and is supportive of the proposed smoking ban ordinance. BC Kay Lupo expressed that she thought there is a "No Smoking" sign in the City. City Manager Jeng indicated that the ordinance will make it law in the City and the sign will cite the Municipal Code. BCL Arlene Honbo offered a last reminder, Hardening the Home will be November 10, 2020, and the more we can get people to protect their homes the better. BC Susan Collida, BC Nicole Tangen and BC Kathleen Hughes requested to sign-up for Hardening the Home.

6. **NEXT MEETING VIA ZOOM:** [February 18, 2021 at 10 a.m.](#)