



Town of Los Altos Hills

Emergency Preparedness and Response Committee

Regular Meeting Minutes

Thursday, August 1st, 2023 6:00 pm. PDT

1. Call to order, start recording [6:00pm]

The meeting was called to order by Chair Kearney.

2. Roll call of members [6:00pm]

Member	Status	Comment
Chair Terry Kearney	present	
Vice-chair Amita Sachdeva	present	
Secretary Dave Stewart	present	
Jim Basiji	absent	Notified committee of an emergency
Phil Harter	present	
Ben Gikis	present	
Sam Wood	present	
Associate Victoria Bebee	present	
Associate Neil Katin	present	
Associate Bill Lattin	absent	Excused
Associate Andy Kirk	absent	
Associate David Gilmour	present	

With 6 of 7 voting members attending, a quorum is present.

2.1 Other attendees

Name	Comment
Larry Carr	Ham club representative
Bill Ralston	Environmental Initiative Committee member
Junjan Shah (arrived 6:12pm)	FEMA Licensed Building inspector. LAH resident

3. Public comment on subjects not on the agenda [6:02pm]

None

4. Remarks from the Chair [6:02pm]

Hoping for a short meeting tonight. Hazard Mitigation Plan had been out for a month, but we received it with a working week to review it. Thanks to those who did review it, but would like a more extensive review next year.

5. Review, correct and approve minutes of the prior meeting [6:08pm]

MOTION to approve the minutes of the July 6th, 2023 meeting.

Member	Moved	Second	Aye	No	Abstain	Recuse	Absent
Chair Terry Kearney	x		x				
Vice-chair Amita Sachdeva			x				
Secretary Dave Stewart			x				
Jim Basiji							x
Phil Harter			x				
Ben Gikis			x				
Sam Wood		x	x				

6 of 6 ayes, no noes, one absent, the minutes are approved.

6. LAH Ham Radio Club Proposal [6:05pm]

Katin: Last meeting there were 2 outstanding questions:

1) What will be the relationship to the LAH Emergency Group? The LAHEG would remain separate as official FCC licensees for the repeater. The Ham Club would exist to attract and train a pool of people who could maintain the amateur radio room in the EOC and the repeater, for the Town, as well as operate it in an emergency at the Town's request.

2) What will be the relationship with the Town and the EPRC. We envision an independent entity, but requests to update Town EOC equipment would start at the EPRC and approved requests would then be presented the Town for consideration.

Wood: The club would be a resource for finding qualified people to staff the EOC. The town would have control in deciding which club members are qualified to maintain or operate in the EOC in an emergency.

Kearney: The proposal suggests 24/7 access to the radio room by the club, but shouldn't it be qualified members?

Katin: yes. Persons doing maintenance, and qualified emergency communicators should have access, not unlike the ECC qualifications.

Ms. Shah arrives

Kearney: How should we pitch this to the town? Does the Club exist yet? Katin: There is a desire for the club to be "bureaucracy light". Founding members are Carr, Lattin, Katin and Gilmour as LAHEG liason. Looking for an approval in concept from the town before creating a resource for the town. Asks that the EPRC approve it, and recommend that Council Liaison Schmidt gets it put on a future Council agenda.

Stewart: Our motion could ask that the town support for formation of the club, and by support we mean provide the resources listed on the slide 5 of "LAH Ham Radio Club EPRC Proposal.pdf. Wood: we need initial support from the town to ensure we're on the right track. In the past, some council members did not support an independent club.

Kearney: Without specificity, council may reject just based on ambiguity. Kearney proposes initial language. Carr: Should prefix with the value the ECC has provided, and that this club is critical to provide that support. Kearney: agrees. The earlier portion of the document describes the value. Katin: We can forward the entire document, and the motion can say the EPRC endorses the requests on slide 5. More discussion.

MOTION: EPRC endorses the creation of the ham radio club as shown in this doc and recommends that the town approves the support as described on slide 5. [Link to updated slides](#)

Member	Moved	Second	Aye	No	Abstain	Recuse	Absent
Chair Terry Kearney	x		x				
Vice-chair Amita Sachdeva			x				
Secretary Dave Stewart			x				
Jim Basiji							x
Phil Harter			x				
Ben Gikis		x	x				
Sam Wood			x				

6 of 6 ayes, no noes, one absent. Motion passes.

7. Standing Reports

7.1 Town Council Liaison Report [6:33pm]

Council member Schmidt is on vacation. No report.

7.2 City Manager’s Report [6:33pm]

Kearney: I’m still very interested in the new Emergency Manager position. It’s been more than two months and we haven’t heard anything. Hepenstal is working on documents and her hours have been cut by 25%, and it should be a concern of everyone on this committee that we are not getting any information. Stewart: Agree, but I believe Pirnejad and Einfalt are both out of town.

7.3 County Fire District Liaison’s Report (Beebe) [6:36pm]

[Link to slides](#). Beebe: “Be Ready: Be Prepared for Wildfire” public information presentation scheduled for Saturday August 19th, 10am at LAH Town Hall.

Integrated Hazardous Fuels Reduction: evacuation route hardening maintenance of Page Mill Road, approx. 5.6 miles. 6400 cubic yards of fuels removed. Kearney: public or private land? Beebe: mixed, need to get owner’s permission. Also dependent on habitat, endangered species and CEQA. Sachdeva: do we do native habitat replacement when habitat is removed? Beebe: not allowed to destroy habitat of protected species. Only cut “4D” trees: decayed, diseased, dying, deranged. Sachdeva: Are we assessing habitat temperature rise due to cutting? Beebe: don’t know. Suggests that we invite Eugenia Woods to answer specific questions. Sachdeva: Wondering if by cutting trees and drying out are we creating a different fire hazard. Shah: or mudslide risk. Kearney: The fire district does consider those things when they do a shaded fuel break. A future agenda item would be to have someone from the evac hardening come to describe the process. Wood: We’re protecting rats, vermin? Shah: Wood rats are protected, they have a social structure. Ralston: how often is protecting species an issue? Beebe: It’s project specific. The LAHCFD.org website has project pages for more information. I’d like to have a project manager come talk to the EPRC. Next project is Mora-Ravensbury, 3.2 miles of windy road, starting Aug 9th.

Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) will have a community outreach meeting on August 30th, in Los Gatos. LAHCFD Annex draft updates are in from the contractor (Dudek), will have an internal review by staff, then a public outreach and comment period will follow.

Firewise Community update: 1 recognized, 4 zones in progress and 3 in development. Stewart: We've created an email list for LAHCFD steering committees to share information about getting through the process. See Stewart to get on the list.

There will be an Active Shooter training on August 14th, and a Silver Alert training, date TBD.

Nathan Rainey of Palo Alto OES contacted Bebee about having the hams help with fire watch on red flag days. Katin: suggest we assist in recruiting local hams, but it would be a Palo Alto run activity.

7.4 Emergency Management Consultant's Report [7:00pm]

Kearney: Emergency Management Consultant is not present, moving on.

7.5 EPRC Standing Subcommittee Reports [7:00 pm]

7.5.1 Community Outreach (Member: Sachdeva) [7:01pm]

Sachdeva: Unsure what's being asked for. Stewart: EPRC table at September safety event. Bebee: LAHCFD and LAH hosting "Touch a Truck Safety Fair" at Gardner Bullis School.

7.5.2 Medical & Environmental Health (Members: Harter/Kearney) [7:02pm]

Harter: Met on 7/17 to understand what's involved and it is very complicated. Jurisdictions include LAH, LAHCFD, County Fire, colleges, and possibly partner cities. Raising more questions than answers. Need to discuss with LAH legal counsel. Will meet again this month.

7.5.3 Town Emergency Plans (Secretary Stewart) [7:04pm]

Stewart: We remain stymied by a lack of the consultant's time, and the lack of information on the joint emergency manager position being contemplated. Our charter is to review the Town's emergency plans, commenting on them, and making them operational, not just binders on a shelf. There were 3 comments on the HMP from the EPRC. We should request the town involve the EPRC more fully than the public comment period. Ralston: Do you know what the process was? Kearney: We need to have the town explain how the process worked, why it was submitted to the county a month before we could see it. I was disappointed with the process and the content. Stewart: The HMP appears to be a county driven process to check legal requirements from the state. Ralston: Los Altos put effort into building an implementable plan. Los Altos Hills looked like they were not planning to do anything. Stewart: There are requirements to fulfill, but you'd still like to have a functional emergency plan, and people trained without reading 500 pages at the start of the emergency.

(Town Hall drops Zoom connection [7:10pm to 7:12pm], minutes unavailable)

7.5.4 Mass Notification (Associate Member Katin) [7:13pm]

Katin: Council Member Schmidt submitted questions:

How many households/people are registered via AlertSCC and Nixle ?

What, if any, difference is there between AlertSCC and Nixel? Why do we keep talking about both of them when the average resident probably doesn't even know about one of them?

How well does AlertSCC work?

We know that even within the EPRC we receive different notices, or don't receive notices when we think we should.

Can we do a test similar to an Emergency Broadcast Alert to see if notices are being received by the intended audience?

Can every resident receive an alert at their home even with poor cell coverage?

What happens when power is out?

What happens if cell phone towers are out?

How well does AlertSCC work for people who find technology challenging?

What are alternatives to AlertSCC?

NOAA radios?

mobile public address system?

?

Can we depend on the sheriff or fire department in the case of a quick evacuation?

What's their procedure?

Where is neighborhood evacuation on the priority list during an emergency?

Katin: These questions are largely about process, and how technology feeds into the process. Kearney: Is Schmidt expecting answers at the next meeting? Katin: Schmidt is not expected at the next meeting. We should publish and give people a chance to think about it. Kearney: how do we go about publishing, in accordance with Brown Act? What is being asked for in the “alternatives to AlertSCC” bullet? Katin: the problem with Nixle, and others, is voluntary registration. Poor penetration is more important than technology.

Stewart: How many people got the police action alert at 3am? Only 1 other. Katin: Alerts can be sent within a radius of a given location. Sachdeva: Does it only use your registered address? Katin: yes, but you can register multiple addresses, e.g. work and home. But it's not based on your real time location. Wireless Emergency Alerts is available, and based on cell phone location. Ralston: is this intended as the first notification, or does it include subsequent notifications? Katin: there are multiple modes: email, voice, text. Stewart: The point of the subcommittee is to analyze the situation and see what can be done to improve the deficiencies. Ralston: has neighborhood watch been considered? Katin: not currently envisioned. Carr: informal use, neighbors helping neighbors.

7.5.5 Emergency Communications (Member Wood/Associate Members Katin) [7:27]

Kearney: Schmidt wanted Sheriff, Fire and Town to respond to the Emergency Communications resolution we passed last month. Katin: One piece is how do we communicate with the Sheriff if the phones go out. Kearney: can we get that on next month's agenda? Stewart: there seems to be scope creep, in that we asked for the Sheriff to discuss evacuation plans, but not the fire department, nor the communications recommendations. Kearney: Schmidt asked for Cody to set up: 1) sheriff to discuss evacuation plans, 2) sheriff and fire presentation on emergency communications procedures. 3) Town to discuss other communication channels identified in the EmComm communication slides backing the resolution.

Carr: Has anyone considered using the ALPRs to evaluate who has evacuated. Discussion: what does it really mean, it's not very specific. ALPRs can give instant feedback to the sheriffs. Ralston: a family leaves separately in two cars, could verify that they did evacuate.

8. Review action items from the meeting [7:35pm]

Stewart to publish Schmidt's email with Mass Notification questions to EPRC.

Stewart to contact Rajiv to see what other functions can be used with ALPRs.

9. Discuss future agenda items [7:36pm]

Invite Sheriff to inform committee on evacuation planning.

Invite Sheriff and Fire to comment on emergency communications with the town: who, how, what?

Request Town Staff’s feedback on Emergency Communications Infrastructure recommendation

Discuss running an Emergency Notification Test to residents, get a report on the AlertSCC police action/shelter in place results.

Request regular updates on emergency manager status, both consultant Hepenstal and discussions on shared manager with Los Altos.

Request Town Staff discuss the process by which the HMP was put together, its purpose and the extent to which it could be extended to gather additional input from the EPRC Noting that the Safety Element, Emergency Operation Plans, Evacuation and other plans are due for updates.

Invite LAHCFD personnel involved with evacuation route hardening to discuss their procedures and limitations. What are the CEQA requirements? Not just the progress to date.

Decided next meeting will be at the regularly scheduled time and place.

10. Adjournment [7:45pm]

Chair adjourned the meeting without objection.

Common abbreviations and jargon used above:

ALPR	Automate License Plate Reader
CEQA	California Environmental Quality Act
CWPP	Community Wildfire Protection Plan
DHV	Disaster Healthcare Volunteers
DSW/DSV	Disaster Service Worker/Volunteer
EMC	Emergency Management Consultant (Hepenstal)
EmComm	Emergency Communications
EOC	Emergency Operations Center
EOP	Emergency Operations Plan
EPRC	Emergency Preparedness and Response Committee
FSC	Fire Safe Council
GTG	Government Technology Group
Ham	Amateur radio
HMP	Hazard Mitigation Plan
IRU	Indefeasible Right of Use
LAH	Los Altos Hills
LAHCFD	Los Altos Hills County Fire District

LAHEG	Los Altos Hills Emergency Group, trustees of the W6LAH repeater
MRC	Medical Reserve/Response Corps
SPECS	South Peninsula Emergency Communications System