MINUTES
Disaster & Fire Safety Commission
Regular Meeting
Wednesday, February 25, 2009
North Berkeley Senior Center
997 Cedar Street, Berkeley, CA 94710

Present: Zachary Weiner, Trudy Washburn, Matt Mitchell, Lynn Zummo, Roger Sharpe, Richard White, Jesse Townley
Absent: Staff: Fire Chief Debra Pryor, Khin Chin
Public: Norine Smith, Bruce Feldman, Carol Feldman, Marie Texeira, Steven Kimbrough, Marion Anderson, Sara Shumer, Pamela Doolan, Larry Henry, Tom Trippe

I. Call to Order

Meeting was called to order at 7:02pm

New commissioner Lynn Zummo from District 5 was welcomed.

II. Public Comment

Norine Smith- Introduced herself as part of a 3 person steering committee that is trying to organize city wide cache groups. She said she comes to the meeting per recommendation of commissioner Weiner from the meeting in January. She provided a communication to the commission from the Berkeley Disaster Prep Neighborhood Network. She indicated her concern of the necessity to organize with surrounding neighborhoods, in particular with her proximity to the N. Berkeley BART station. Her organization may pursue becoming a 501(c) (3). She continues to see the challenge as maintaining and generating action from the neighborhoods.

Marion Anderson Represents the Josephine and Grant Street groups and indicated her support for Ms. Smith’s comment.
Tom Trippe from the Northside Em-Prep group emphasized that OES and the Fire Department should add back to the OES website the information existing neighborhood group websites. El Camino Real was one of the web sites. Northside’s website has been. He said that he would like the links for the Northside and the El Camino Real web sites back onto the City’s website. Some details – how to integrate the incident command system, neighborhood drills- that are not in the CERT manuals could then be referenced by interested neighborhoods.

Trudy Washburn said that Hillside school was discussed and the City Council voted in favor of keeping the open space at Hillside school. Tax measures focused on neighborhood residents would fund this action.

III. Minutes of Meeting of January 28th, 2009.*

For the Public Comment section:

Roger corrected his comment that according to the experts, there is a more than 99% chance that a magnitude 6.7 or greater earthquake will occur in California within the next 30 years.

Jesse corrected that survey was on soft story rather than URMs.

Motion: To Approve the Minutes as amended J. Townley
Second: R. Sharpe

Vote: (7 Aye 0 Noes, 0 Absent: )

IV. Annual Election of Commission Chair and Vice Chair
Z. Weiner indicated his desire to run for Commission chair

Motion: To nominate Z. Weiner as Chair: R. Sharpe
Second: M. Mitchell

Z. Weiner accepted the nomination.

Vote: (7 Aye 0 Noes, 0 Absent)

Motion: To close nominations M. Mitchell
Second: R. Sharpe

Vote: (7 Aye 0 Noes, 0 Absent)

Z. Weiner elected Chair of the Commission by Acclamation.

J. Townley indicated that he would step down as Vice Chair and that the commission is seeking nominations for Vice Chair.

L. Zummo indicated that she would be willing to serve as Vice Chair

Motion: To nominate L. Zummo as Vice Chair: M. Mitchell
Second: T. Washburn

Vote: (7 Aye 0 Noes, 0 Absent)

L. Zummo accepted the nomination

Motion: To close nominations T. Washburn
Second: M. Mitchell

Vote: (7 Aye 0 Noes, 0 Absent)

L. Zummo elected Vice Chair of the Commission by Acclamation.

V. Public Work Commission Communication re: Utility Undergrounding*
Z. Weiner indicated that evacuation routes were a primary consideration that was the focus.

In public comment, Larry Henry, Chair of PWC, said his commission has been charged by council to develop a plan for public utilities. Determine a criteria for major arterials and what order should they be done. The March 24 consent calendar will contain their recommendation. This is an attempt to determine what approach will yield the greatest good for the greatest number. Approximately 1mil/year is received to underground utilities. PGE, ATT and Comcast provides much of this funding. $1mil in today’s dollars represents 2 blocks. It would take approximately 37 years with the current criteria. The commission hopes to convey that new funding must be obtained to make a feasible and effective plan.

Continuing public comment, Pamela Doolan, asked what is expected from the Disaster and Fire Safety Commission. One of the concerns is that there are 3 criteria and all three must be met. This excludes all major streets in North East Berkeley. She indicated that there are projects that are 25 years old and that the recommendation from the Public Works Commission does not address this issue. She indicated that the city needs to more aggressively search out funding. She said that Ashy is a state highway and 20A funds should not be applied to this since state highway funds should be made available for this. The City should look at infrastructure funding from
Washington or FEMA funds. The recommendation should not be limited to arterial routes.

Continuing public comment, Sarah Shumer, a retired commissioner, said she was involved in this project. There has been discussion that the funds should be diverted from these projects. A lot of 20A money has been spent on the hills. The recommendation was based on the fact that the city has limited funds, recommended to council to seek other funds, Ashby, and UC Berkeley. First Priority goes to major evacuation and first responder routes that will carry tens of thousands of people. Once those are done, then the collector streets could be addressed. During the 1990’s there was a campaign for a “Wireless Berkeley”, there was no funding. The intent of the proposal is to take care of the first priorities and then there would be process for the collector streets.

Z. Weiner asked the commission if the proposal from the PWC should be approved by the DFSC as written.

J. Townley indicated that he has spoken to the PWC on this issue. The issue is a consideration of a vital need. Alta Bates is on Ashby. Ashby is also an inbound route. Many other streets are also inbound routes. He indicated that the reality of funding for these projects is that there is a limitation on how many projects can be completed. 37 years is ludicrous. He said that language urging the city council to recognize the urgency of this issue should be included.
Z. Weiner said that the city is under contract for an above ground water system expected later this year. If wires are down, this system cannot be deployed. This is a citywide problem and the timeline is unacceptable. However, the priorities do make sense for response, evacuation and recovery in a disaster.

M. Mitchell said that Hwy 13 is the only state highway that goes through the city. This is essential to both egress and ingress.

Motion: To send letter of support for the December 8 memo from the utilities sub group as written: M. Mitchell

Motion to amend by adding J. Townley.
Second: M. Mitchell

In light of the 37 years needed at current funding levels for major arterial and primary evacuation routes, it is clear that extra funding is needed immediately. We urge the City to pursue all public and private funding as a matter of urgent public safety.

Vote: (5 Aye 1 Noes: Dick White, Abstain: T. Washburn)

Chief Pryor indicated that the general plan does not detail the evacuation plan. PD has primary responsibility for evacuation.

Chief Pryor indicated that Sacramento, Ashby, Gilman, Martin Luther King Jr. Way, Telegraph, Arlington, Cedar, Dwight, Grizzly Peak and possibly Euclid and College are considered evacuation routes.

K. Chin and Z. Weiner to draft letter to send to PWC.

VI. Staff Report
Chief Pryor sitting in for Deputy Chief Dong as the secretary of commission.

No significant fires.

March 9 will be a recruit academy for 3 FF/Paramedics. These are hires to anticipate retirements. This is a 13 week academy.

Fire Records Management software upgrades went live this week. This is in collaboration with the Police Department.

CERT training classes have been added. Possible midweek schedule for classroom based classes are being evaluated.

Z. Weiner indicated that he had heard from residents who have preference for weekday classes.

Above ground water system equipment is in production and expected in the late fall. Training from the manufacturer will come at that time as well. The construction of the warehouse at 10th and Folger is still in design review. The intent of the warehouse is to store the equipment.

D. White asked about the final cost of the warehouse. Chief Pryor said that it would be $5mil.

Regarding automatic shutoff valves, the Fire Department takes no position on this issue. Councilmember Wengraf submitted a recommendation that staff bring a recommendation on requiring these be mandatory for new
construction, point of sale of homes, and when remodel projects exceed $20,000. Council requested the city manager to do a staff report.

Z. Weiner asked about the timeline regarding Measure GG project implementation. Chief Pryor said that the special revenue fund has been set up as of January. Mid-stream in regards to departmental restructuring. The department is moving forward with the Battalion chief classification. Emergency Services Coordinator classification will be created in the Office of Emergency Services. This will go to Personnel Board on Monday March 2 and on the March 24 City Council agenda. July continues to be the target date pending City Council approval. The Assistant Chief over special operations exam is being tested to the assignment. The target is an exam in the month of May. Lieutenant in EMS in April, and Captain in training in May.

VII. Update re: BUSD Disaster Planning

Z. Weiner said that he met with Margit Roos-Collins regarding collaboration with the city and BUSD and in particular with the Public Health Department. BUSD and the public health department are discussing the plan for the public health clinic at Berkeley High School. The fire department and a group of volunteers have already been working with BUSD. Questions surrounding logistics and the incident command system within the school system were discussed.
Chief Pryor said that joint emergency operations with the school district and the City’s EOC have been in discussion.

Margit, Z. Weiner, K. Chin will meet with someone from PH.

VIII. Update re: UC Berkeley Disaster Planning

Z. Weiner said that he met with Captain Beckford, in charge of their field services, on fire prevention in the hills and is working with them on a proposal on how to envision dealing with homeless encampments. UC Berkeley’s position is that a complaint with a defined location will be investigated but outside of fire season, patrols are not normal operating procedure. Summer hill patrol is anticipated to be in effect this summer. This is a team of two students. The main police non-emergency number 642-6760 would be the contact number.

IX. Update re: Disaster Planning for Pets

J. Townley said that the network of Disaster Planning for Pets needs to reconvene since the departure of the former ED of Humane society.

X. Update re: Fire Safety and Disaster Preparedness in ES-R Zone (Panoramic Hill)

D. White said that $25000 in matching funds for the feasibility study of an emergency road A requirement that the nuclear free zone and 3 provinces of Tibet agreement.
A FEMA grant Claremont canyon conservancy and UCB on clearing eucalyptus. FEMA’s list of 6 questions. $5mil grant. The HEF is participating.

XI. Workshop re: Annual Report to Council*

Motion: To enter workshop: T. Washburn
Second: R. Sharpe

Vote: (7 Aye 0 Noes, 0 Absent)

Motion: To leave workshop: M Mitchell
Second: T. Washburn

Vote: (7 Aye 0 Noes, 0 Absent)

XII. March and April Meeting Schedule

Motion to move March and April meetings to March 18 and April 1: Z. Weiner

Second: M. Mitchell

Vote: (7 Aye 0 Noes, 0 Absent)

XIII. Enhancing Safety of Berkeley Residents by Requiring the Installation of Automatic Earthquake Shut-Off Valves*

Taken out of order motion T. Washburn

Second: R. Sharpe
Vote: (7 Aye 0 Noes, 0 Absent)

T. Washburn said she went to the Council meeting speaking in favor. The item passed to send to staff for a recommendation. Most large communities for new construction. The item is for remodel exceeding $20,000, sale.

Z. Weiner asked if this is required in commercial construction or remodels. Staff has already noted this and will be in recommendation to council.

M. Mitchell commented that it could possibly be a good idea if a neighborhood knows how to turn the gas back on. There is a significant perceived risk for improper implementation.

T. Washburn said that the newer models do not trip from minor vibration like a truck passing by. M. Mitchell said that there is concern with any amount of tripping.

T. Trippe said that the risk associated with unlit pilot lights is smaller than perceived. Some may be trained to do this. City permits cost approximately 50% as much installation of the shutoff valve.

J. Townley said that the retrofit transfer tax shows the city’s willingness to possibly adjust fees.

Motion: to table until staff has made recommendation: Z. Weiner

Second: J. Townley
Vote: (7 Aye 0 Noes, 0 Absent)

XIV. Future Agenda Items

Move to Adjourn: T. Washburn

Second: Z. Weiner

Vote: (7 Aye 0 Noes, 0 Absent)

Meeting Adjourned at 9:24pm