



**KENSINGTON FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT**  
MEETING OF THE EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS COMMITTEE  
MINUTES  
Thursday, August 26, 2021 3:00pm-5:00pm  
Via Zoom Teleconference

**1. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL**

Directors: Larry Nagel and Kevin Padian

Public Members: Lisa Caronna, Katie Gluck, Peter Liddell, Danielle Madugo, Paul Moss.

David Spath

Staff: Chief Michael Pigoni, General Manager Bill Hansell

Consultant: Emergency Preparedness Coordinator Johnny Valenzuela

Public: Mike Shanks (Genasys), Sgt. Nath (KPD), ~~Meredith~~ Gerhardt (OES), Chris Roller, Chris Hilliard, Lorena Herrera (CWS), Paul Dorroh, 1415~~47~~16586

**2. PUBLIC COMMENT**

This place on the agenda is reserved for comments and inquiries concerning matters that do not otherwise appear on the agenda.

There was no public comment.

**3. ADOPTION OF CONSENT ITEMS**

Items listed below are consent items, which are considered routine and will be enacted by one motion. Reports and recommendations prior to assigning consent item designations to the various items have been received and considered. Copies of the reports are on file in the Fire Protection District Administrative Office at 217 Arlington Avenue and are available to the public. The disposition of the item is indicated. There will be no separate discussion of consent items. If discussion is requested for an item, that item will be removed from the list of consent items and considered separately on the agenda. (Supporting material)

**a. Approval of Minutes** of the regular meeting of July 22, 2021 (Approve)

**MOTION:** Moss/Spath: To adopt consent items.

Motion passed by consensus.

**4. NEW BUSINESS**

**a. Emergency Warning System**

Kevin introduced the topic of emergency warning systems. He prefaced his remarks by noting that in a prolonged outage (wildfire, earthquake, PSPS) after a few days most cellphones and laptops would be dead, as would routers. Cell towers would mostly be down and providers would likely not be able to recharge them. Battery-powered radios could be the only option because CWS, WEA, reverse-911, etc. would not work. PA systems could be the only effective local source of notifications and warnings (blocked routes, electrical and other hazards, etc.). But they would have to

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be controlled and activated through our Police and Fire departments and the County OES, and this is what we needed to learn about.

Chief Pigoni weighed in on the warning systems. He has no problem with a public warning system as an additional level of warning for the public. His concern is how the system would be used in conjunction with other communities and the county. One major design problem is who will do the testing and where should speakers be positioned. Another question is whether County will be willing to support these systems. We've been talking about this for two or three years. Chief Pigoni noted that it is time to get more details such as determining how many speakers we need, what permits will be necessary, whether the public is supportive of these systems or whether they are opposed to the noise. Another issue that needs to be resolved is how will these systems be activated and who will be responsible for activation. Chief Pigoni feels that there is a lot more research to be done.

Lorena Herrera (Contra Costa COunty OES) noted that the CWS can already reach local neighborhoods (and Zonehaven is a localized grid to facilitate this). We have WEA, reverse-911, and the NWS (NOAA) radio notifications. She said that in an emergency the County can use the NWS system, but that likely this would be a last resort compared to the other systems.

(In a subsequent conversation, Meredith from the OES clarified, if I am understanding it correctly, that the County would not be asking NWS to make an announcement. Instead they would override the frequency, much as an EWS can interrupt a TV program to issue a bulletin. We need more clarification on this.)

Danielle Madugo asked whether we could depend on NOAA weather bands for local evacuation orders, and we need to confirm this. She also noted that PA systems can give real-time, fine-grained information for local neighborhoods. (A big question is who will issue such information during emergencies, because all personnel may be engaged in the field. To be discussed ...)

Mike Shanks noted that Berkeley will be using warning sounds and voice messages. Chief May at the Berkeley Fire Department is a lot farther down the road on these issues. Mike noted that all these different services are great and all of the systems are complementary.

Kevin Padian noted that there are about 100 sirens in Contra Costa County but it isn't clear who operates them. Kevin noted that it is inevitable that there will be complaints from citizens, but we will need a strong program of education and a survey of the community to find out what they understand and what their concerns are.

General Manager Bill Hansell noted that he and Johnny Valenzuela had a meeting with Assistant Chief Keith May from the Berkeley Fire Department and the meeting was very productive. There will be a proposal presented to the Berkeley City Council in September. Bill noted that Chief May and his staff have come a long way and are completely behind the public alerting system. Bill also noted that messages from the Berkeley system will be prefaced with the information about who the messages are for. Bill's goal for our new Grant Proposal Writer is first to focus on the PSB funding and second on the possibility of getting funds for these devices, should the

Board decide to acquire them.

Dave Spath asked if there could be interference in notifications with Zonehaven because three of the zones overlap both Kensington and El Cerrito. (We'd need to know more about how Zonehaven might be used, and we'd need potential examples of how a PA notice in Kensington could possibly mislead folks in El Cerrito.)

Larry Nagel asked how well the system could be heard in high winds. Mike Shanks answered that the speakers have been designed to render intelligible voice, but the answer is very dependent on individual circumstances. Bill Hansell noted in his conversation with Chief May that Berkeley believes that the alerts can be heard by many but not all of the Berkeley residents. Kevin Padian noted that it is not necessary that every resident hear the system; with a neighborhood alert system that must be part of this project, neighbors will help neighbors.

Sgt. Nath, substituting last-minute for Chief Gancasz, affirmed that the Chiefs agree with each other and that they will support the technology if it's acquired. He stressed that we will need a broad campaign of community awareness.

Lisa Caronna expressed concerns about using NOAA because people are just not familiar with this service. Lisa noted that the EOC would be responsible for providing information to the public, so it is important to tie in a local system with the EOC.

Danielle Madugo asked Mike Shanks how the Genasys system would be tied into the Earthquake Warning System. Mike noted that the quick answer is that the Genasys system can take in a number of inputs, including an Earthquake Detection System.

Mike Shanks noted that Genasys just purchased Zonehaven and that they are still working on the integration process.

**b. Evacuation Communication Discussion**

Bill brought up the related question of the evacuation plan for Kensington. Police and Fire are coordinating on plans to modify parking configurations as needed. Chief Pigoni stated that the Zonehaven zones are up and running, and could be used today if needed. They will use CWS for a controlled evacuation with Zonehaven. We're going on faith that the residents know the roads well enough that they can have alternate evacuation routes in mind if necessary. Sgt. Nath noted that Lt. Harms and the DPW have erected two new evacuation signs near Arlington and Sunset, and he recommended that people watch the Netflix biopic on the Paradise Fire and the evacuation hazards that they faced. Larry said that zones are important, because we can't very well all evacuate at once; pre-evacuation is important but will we have the luxury? (This might also be said for deploying zones sequentially, if a fire flares close to us suddenly.) Danielle announced that Hilltop School has a new principal so hopefully progress on evacuation drill procedures can continue.

(Another note from a later conversation with Meredith: she asked why we would be interested in spending money on outdoor PA systems when we could simply buy everyone in town a weather radio that can be programmed to go off (sound and light) for an emergency announcement. Good idea, although this could be a labor-intensive project: the devices have to be charged, plugged in, and activated for alerts in order

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to be of use, and this may be difficult for some residents to do or maintain. Moreover, the NWS tests its emergency notification system once a week, so you have this huge noise and flashing lights going off in your house all the time; after a few weeks some residents might simply unplug the things. But maybe there are similar, less problematic solutions ...)

Mike Pignoni noted that we have zones for evacuation. There are only a few ways to get out of town and residents have to know the roads and know how to use alternate routes to get out of town.

Sergeant Nath noted that changing the parking culture in Kensington will be difficult. Also, the Police Department will not have a lot of people to assist with an evacuation.

Kevin agreed that we have to address the parking issue. Residents have to understand that these decisions are not the purview of individual blocks or neighborhoods. Obstructions farther along the evacuation routes will lead to blockages and hazards at upper levels. We need a strong campaign of education and sensitizing residents to the reality that they influence more than their own blocks.

Larry Nagel noted that we have to evacuate by zones or we will overload the roads.

Johnny Valenzuela asked if there is anything keeping us from evacuating by zones. At present, the only thing keeping us from evacuating by zones is a lack of understanding of Zonehaven zones.

Paul Moss noted that the CWS will, at the direction of the incident commander, notify the residents of which zones to evacuate and which routes to take.

**c. JPA for Vegetation Management of East Bay WUI**

Bill Hansell gave an update on a meeting with David Early regarding the formation of the East Bay Vegetation Management Joint Powers Agency (JPA). This agency is in the very early stages of formation and would have as a mission funding and managing vegetation management projects along the WUI extending from Oakland to El Sobrante. The members of the Emergency Preparedness Committee thought that there was power in numbers and that we should investigate this matter further. Peter Guerrero volunteered to serve on a committee, and it was decided to bring the matter before the Kensington Fire Protection District Board.

**PA for Vegetation Management of East Bay WUI**

5. (4:15pm) Update on meeting with David Early regarding formation.

**a. Action – Approve motion to recommend participation to the Board of Directors.**

**MOTION:** Nagel/Madugo to participate in discussions regarding the formation of the East Bay Vegetation Management Joint Powers Agency (JPA)

Motion passed unanimously.

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**b. Emergency Preparedness Coordinator Report**

Emergency Preparedness Coordinator Johnny Valenzuela noted that he has put together a pamphlet that addresses emergency preparedness, including go kits, red flag days, parking, evacuation. This will be mailed very soon.

Johnny also noted that National Night Out was very successful in getting the word out for emergency preparedness. Neighbors in the Willamette area were very constructive about possibilities of altering parking configurations as needed to facilitate evacuation.

Lisa Caronna expressed her appreciation for the two articles in the latest *Outlook* on Emergency Preparedness

**c. Emergency Radio Page on Website**

This item is in progress.

**d. Reports from Committee Members**

Danielle Madugo noted that we now have a principal at Hilltop and we are moving on an evacuation drill.

Kevin Padian noted that Lt. Harms ~~has largely been~~ pulled off traffic evacuation planning, because several senior officers ~~have~~ left the District and he is responsible for a lot of training and administrative work until some new people can be hired. We have new evacuation signs at the cemetery and the old signs are now at Sunset and Arlington.

Bill Hansell reported progress on the building and on a temporary building for the Police Department and the Fire Department. Our grant writer is working on grants for the earthquake retro fit of Station 65, as well.

**6. CALL FOR FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

**7. ADJOURNMENT**

The next regular meeting of the Emergency Preparedness Committee of the Kensington Fire Protection District will be held on September 23, 2021 at 3:00pm via Zoom Teleconference.

The meeting was adjourned with a moment of silence for the tragic events that happened today in Afghanistan.

Adjourned at 5:05 PM by Director Kevin Padian

MINUTES PREPARED BY: Larry Nagel

These minutes were approved at the Emergency Preparedness Committee Meeting of the Kensington Fire Protection District on September 23, 2021.

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Attest:

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**Emergency Preparedness Committee Member**

DRAFT