

# **TOWN OF FAIRFAX**

## **STAFF REPORT**

**TO: Mayor and Town Council      MEETING DATE: August 1, 2007**

**FROM: Linda Kelly, Town Manager**

**SUBJECT: Report of the Fairfax Citizens' Disaster Council activities**

The Fairfax Citizens' Disaster Council was reactivated in July 2006 at the request of Council Member Susan Brandborg, then serving as Mayor. The Town Council agreed that since the December 31, 2005 and April 11, 2006 disasters had caused disaster preparedness to be foremost in residents' minds, the Town needed to be more proactive with respect to discussing the Town's preparation for and response to disasters.

The Citizens' Disaster Council has now been active for over a year, and there was a desire on the part of the Disaster Council to provide an overview of their activities to the Town Council and the community of Fairfax.

### **OVERVIEW**

The Citizens' Disaster Council is provided for in the Fairfax Municipal Code, Chapter 2.52. The Town Manager coordinates the Council, with assistance from the Community Resources Coordinator as time permits. Pursuant to the Town Municipal Code, the Citizens' Disaster Council consists of the Mayor, currently Larry Bragman, the Director of Emergency Services (Town Manager), Police Chief, Fire Chief, and "representatives of civic, business, labor, veterans, professional or other organizations having an official emergency responsibility, as may be appointed by the Director with the advice and consent of the Town Council." (Section 2.52.030) The Disaster Council has had a representative from the County Office of Emergency Services, Bruce Stahley, and from the Fairfax Library, Gail Weimann, as regular representatives to our meetings. Representatives from the American Red Cross regularly attend and we have had some representation from the Ross Valley School District, who we invited to be a member of the Council. At-large community membership has included various community members who attend as they have the time, including Jon Marchant, Penny Clark, and Cindy Swift. The Disaster Council does not have a set membership roster nor terms for its members, as this is not specified in the Municipal Code. We have operated as a Brown Act committee and have posted all agendas and kept all meetings open to the public.

### **Meetings**

The Disaster Council has held 10 meetings since its inception. The agendas and minutes for the meetings are posted on line at <http://www.townoffairfax.org/BoardsandCommissions/CitizensDisasterCouncil/>.

## **CERT Training**

The Disaster Council has been active in receiving updates from Captain Craig Carroll of Ross Valley Fire with respect to the Community Emergency Response Training program through Central Marin CERT. Several members of the Disaster Council have been CERT trained. The members have been active in encouraging other community members to become trained as well. The Town Manager, on behalf of the Disaster Council, was able to get the Ross Valley Reporter to run a large, no-cost public service ad in the newspaper announcing CERT training.

## **“Get Ready” Program**

The Disaster Council has heard updates from Ross Valley Fire with respect to a grant that has been received by Central Marin CERT to expand into the “Get Ready” program. This program is under development and the Disaster Council will be active in providing feedback and publicity for this program, which aims to encourage more residents to be prepared and trained for disasters by using a more compact, readily accessible training format.

## **Emergency Operations Plan**

The Disaster Council was active in reviewing the draft Town Emergency Operations Plan and providing input on the document before it went to the Town Council for review. The Emergency Operations Plan was adopted by the Town Council in September 2006, and provides for public employees’ disaster response procedures and augments our FEMA-required preparation documents.

## **Home Safety Emergency Plan Prep Guides**

What first started as a disaster calendar project evolved into a project to purchase and distribute Home Safety Emergency Plan brochures in the community. The brochures are a handy guide, with a magnet on the back, and explain what to do in cases of emergency. Several business and community organizations donated money toward the brochures, totaling \$2,100. With these funds, 800 Home Emergency Plan brochures were purchased and distributed to public locations and businesses.

## **Emergency Warning Siren**

Thanks to the donation of \$50,000 from Supervisor Hal Brown, which was matched with \$50,000 of Measure F funding, we were able to install the first of three emergency warning sirens in 2007. The Disaster Council reviewed the siren proposal and provided a resident’s perspective on the siren protocol and procedures.

## **Grand Jury Report**

In September 2006, the Town of Fairfax was required to respond to a Marin County Civil Grand Jury report on “The Next Disaster: Are Marin Citizens Prepared?” The Disaster Council was active in reviewing the Town Manager’s draft response to the Grand Jury before it was approved by the Town Council and submitted to the County.

## **Disaster Preparedness Fairs**

The Disaster Council coordinated and sponsored two disaster preparedness events in Town. On March 25<sup>th</sup>, 2006, a Disaster Preparedness and Home Safety Fair was held in the Pavilion, and on September 17<sup>th</sup>, 2006, an outdoor Disaster Preparedness Fair was held in Bolinas Park, in conjunction with the Townwide Picnic coordinated by the Fairfax Volunteers.

## **Blood Drive**

The Disaster Council co-sponsored a blood drive coordinated by resident Cindy Swift and the Blood Centers of the Pacific on January 27, 2007. The event was also co-sponsored by the Friends of the Fairfax Library and was held at the Fairfax Library.

## **Pandemic Flu Preparation**

On October 16, 2006, the Disaster Council sponsored a talk in Fairfax by County Health Officer Dr. Fred Schwartz on the issue of the pandemic flu threat and preparations being taken at the national, state and local level.

## **Ross Valley Watershed Project**

The Disaster Council heard updates from staff on the Ross Valley Watershed Project, and discussed the Flood Zone 9 proposal and the watershed-wide mail in ballot election. They also were updated on a creek walk and hydrology and hydrologic studies.

## **Marin Emergency Medical Corps**

At their June 12, 2007 meeting, the Disaster Council heard a presentation by the Marin County Medical Reserve Corps, a group that is available in times of disaster to assist with medical needs.

## **Flood Hazard Mitigation Plan**

On June 12, 2007, the Disaster Council also received a report from the Town's consultant for our flood hazard mitigation plan update, Paula Schulz. The Disaster Council is serving as a review committee with respect to the update of the plan.

## **Funding**

The Disaster Council was formed and operated with essentially no funding and no budget. Staff time was devoted to the Council by the Town Manager and the Community Resources Coordinator, as she had time, although the latter position is only budgeted to assist the Parks and Recreation Commission's and the Volunteer Board's programs.

## **CONCLUSION**

The Disaster Council has served a useful role in the Town's response to and preparation for disasters. The Disaster Council will continue its work into the foreseeable future. Our challenge is that as the flood disaster fades in community memories, we need to keep the issue of disaster preparedness and response fresh in people's minds. The Disaster Council serves as one vehicle for keeping the public engaged in disaster preparation.