

**MINUTES
CITY OF UNION CITY
CITY COUNCIL
SPECIAL MEETING AND WORK SESSION**

**TUESDAY, JANUARY 30, 2007
6:00 PM**

**CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS
34009 ALVARADO-NILES ROAD**

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Green called the meeting to order at 6:07 p.m.

I.a Pledge of Allegiance – Mayor Green led the salute to the flag.

I.b Roll Call

Present: Councilmembers Dutra-Vernaci, Fernandez and Valle, Vice Mayor
Navarro, Mayor Green

Absent: None

II. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS – None.

**III. WORK SESSION –
Emergency Operations Center and Disaster Preparedness**

Mayor Green announced two guest speakers were present: Alameda County Emergency Manager (Retired) Linda Shelton, and Mayor Frank Mecham from the City of Paso Robles.

City Manager Cheeves provided introductory remarks and spoke about the importance of pre-defining the role of the City Council in the event of an emergency. The purpose of the work session is to learn about what to expect in the event of an emergency, and to refine the city's current emergency preparedness plan.

Fire Chief Rodriguez expressed his appreciation to Council for its vision and commitment to defining the role of the Council during natural and man-made disasters.

3.a Presentation by Alameda County Emergency Manager (Retired) Linda Shelton

Ms. Shelton presented information covering the role of the Emergency Operations Center (EOC); Standardized Emergency Management Systems (SEMS)/National Incident Management System (NIMS); Disaster Management Considerations; and, Council Disaster Response. Key issues discussed included:

- EOC environments and activation
- Typical city Incident Command Systems (ICS)
- Information flow/data management
- Operational area definitions and responsibilities
- Keys features of SEMS/NIMS
- Disaster management considerations such as staffing dilemmas, resource management and long-term resource support
- Debris management
- Safety assessments of public and private properties
- Managing donated goods and services
- Local assistance centers
- Media and VIP considerations
- EOC director, legal advisor, public information officer, City Council
- Recovery issues (FEMA and local government)

3.b Presentation by Mayor Frank Mecham, City of Paso Robles

Mayor Mecham provided background information regarding the community of Paso Robles and shared his personal experiences as Mayor in dealing with the destruction resulting from, and the impacts of, a 6.5 earthquake on December 23, 2003. Key considerations learned included:

- having a City Council that is familiar with what its role should be in the event of a disaster
- briefing all Councilmembers often, and identifying one Councilmember as spokesperson so that the Council “speaks with one voice”
- getting out of the way of people who know what to do and are trained for emergencies
- managing the numerous visitors that will arrive in the city, including the media and statewide elected officials (logistical and protocol challenges)
- identifying a way to communicate with the public often (Mayor Mecham used a local radio station to accomplish this task)
- creating a thorough paper trail from the onset to properly track expenses and directives
- identifying financial, legal and insurance resource(s) to work with FEMA
- enlisting the aid of local utilities, agencies, school district and Chamber of Commerce personnel
- streamlining processes and procedures for property owners securing permits and inspections both before and after disasters

3.c Questions and Answers

The following represent some of the key questions and responses:

- Q. How do we best prepare for infrastructure repairs resulting from a disaster?
- A. Prepare an inventory of local resources (i.e., heavy equipment contractors, medical/dental providers) and volunteer resources, and consider holding safety fairs with other agencies and utilities.

- Q. How do we prepare for a pandemic or bio-disaster?
A. Public education programs are available through public health agencies; establish evacuation routes for any disaster.
- Q. Did FEMA respond to Paso Robles?
A. Yes. Paso Robles is still dealing with outstanding FEMA issues. When a disaster strikes, FEMA arrives and sets up its own work station. Mayor Mecham stressed the importance of identifying resources that can begin working with FEMA immediately, and the importance of documenting everything.
- Q. How did you get the word out to your community about the location of the EOC?
A. Used the local radio station to broadcast information updates. A local theater also offered its complex for 'town hall' meetings.
- Q. Was cable television useful?
A. Not really. Local television news stations were useful as well as satellite phone service.
- Q. Did most of your city staff reside in town?
A. Yes, about 70 percent of city staff lived in town. It is important to utilize flexible scheduling to avoid staff burnout.
- Q. Were there any curfew issues?
A. No, they were fortunate to have had damage in concentrated areas of the city where security was contained.
- Q. Was nearby Highway 101 closed?
A. No, but there was concern about the impact of a fissure that was discovered.
- Q. How was garbage and debris handled?
A. The city utilized volunteers with front-end loaders to take care of immediate needs.
- Q. What role did the school district play?
A. School was not in session when the earthquake hit. It is important for the city and school district to discuss disaster planning issues.
- Q. Was the National Red Cross available?
A. Yes. The Red Cross responded immediately. Churches were also very helpful.
- Q. What happens when local responders are also the victims of the disaster?
A. The California mutual aid agreement and system are very valuable. Neighboring cities provided invaluable assistance.

- Q. Are there do's and don'ts when dealing with FEMA issues?
- A. FEMA will send assessment teams to review the city's work plan and explain their process. After that, it's a negotiation process, and can be complicated and frustrating. Hire someone who is familiar with FEMA processes right away; it will save the city time and money in the long run.
- Q. Who is the Public Information Officer for Union City, and how will the community know about disaster preparedness plans?
- A. City staff has been identified to assume certain roles in the event of a disaster. The City's emergency preparedness plan needs to be continually reviewed and updated, and requires ongoing training since staff resources change over time. It is also important to include in the training other agencies, the school district, and the City Council.
- Q. What about setting up safety fairs?
- A. Safety is an issue that needs to be kept in front of people so that they are reminded of the potential for disaster. CERT and Neighborhood Watch groups are a good place to start.

3.d Public Comment

Deputy City Manager Acosta reported that the city is negotiating with the service provider to handle debris removal and disposal issues as an important component of the city's disaster preparedness plan.

Margaret Edgelow asked about communications between police and fire when no phone service is available. Mayor Mecham noted the importance of establishing pre-identified frequencies.

Kathy Sweeney spoke about a Red Cross Shelter Management training session she had attended and suggested Union City could host a similar training session. Ms. Sweeney also noted CERT will be offering classes in disaster preparedness.

Barry Ferrier spoke about the importance of communications planning and involving the public in disaster preparedness training.

Carolyn Pashion inquired as to the parties responsible for the city's disaster program.

John Whiting, President of Union City Firefighters Local 1946, expressed support for the recommendations presented tonight.

Ms. Shelton noted that all schools are pre-designated as shelters, provided they are not occupied with students at the time of a disaster. It is important to get the word out to the community about where to go in the event of a disaster, and to work closely with the school district about school/shelter availability. If there are not enough Red Cross volunteers to staff shelters, it would be the city's responsibility to open and staff a shelter.

3.e Council Comments

- Mobilization is critical
- Establish an inventory of resources
- Conduct safety fairs, emergency drills
- Coordinate resources with community stakeholders: Masonic home, dental and medical offices, school district and churches, et cetera.
- Establish evacuation routes (freeway, train tracks)
- Work with City Attorney regarding rules for operating without a quorum in the event Councilmembers are unavailable
- Utilize CERT and Neighborhood Watch programs as a way to educate residents (integrate Fire Department/Police Department staff in promoting one another's programs)
- Homeowners should know what to do and remember that their own homes provide the best shelter, when possible
- Consider waiving permits and/or fees for retrofitting projects

Fire Chief Rodriguez expressed his appreciation for Council's willingness to allow staff the time necessary to prepare a thorough and overall business plan for disaster preparedness, emphasizing a lot of work has been done already, but additional work still needs to be completed.

City Manager Cheeves stated staff would continue its work on refining the city's disaster plan, and would include any additional staffing resource needs as part of the budget process for next fiscal year.

IV. ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Green adjourned the meeting at 8:39 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Renee Elliott
City Clerk