

CITY OF WHEELER

CITY COUNCIL – WORKSHOP MINUTES

November 30th, 2023

Call to Order

Mayor Kemp called the meeting to order at 2:05 PM.

Roll Call

Present onsite:

City Council: Councilor Deanne Ragnell, Councilor Heidi Stacks, Councilor Gordon Taylor,
Councilor Karen Matthews, Mayor Clif Kemp

City Staff: Pax Broder, Madi Chesnut, Phil Chick

Guests: Paul Knight

Present via Zoom:

Guests:

Absent:

City Council: Councilor Walt Porter

New Business

Councilor Stacks gave a presentation on ICS Training and Wheeler Incident Command Strategies. She has been working on this project since February 2016 when there were multiple disasters in Wheeler. A 20-foot hole opened in the highway, the Gervais Creek weir backed up, there was flooding through downtown, the Hemlock Street weir backed up, and there were trees down at Ridgeview. Wheeler was cut off. The Public Works Director was at a training class in Hood River. The next morning at 4am a boil water notice went out. Councilor Stacks thought we should be able to do better in an emergency. All these years later we are still trying to mitigate these same hazard areas in town.

Councilor Ragnell questioned if this was a one-night event or an accumulation over time. Councilor Stacks replied that there were king tides and significant rain on a single night after the ground had already been saturated from rain. Wheeler didn't have a chain of command, regulations for how to do things, or the proper paperwork. Councilor Stacks didn't know how to contact the Mayor or City Manager. The Fire Department was cut off. This truly was a Wheeler event. Mr. Knight said the American Red Cross showed up 3 days later to help clean, but by then most of it was already done.

ORS 401.305 states that each county of this state shall, and each city or tribal government may, establish an emergency management agency that is directly responsible to the executive officer or governing body of the county, city or tribe. Councilor Matthews confirmed that it says cities "may." Councilor Stacks mentioned that FEMA wants us to have a functioning emergency plan if we want to qualify for financial reimbursement after a disaster.

ORS 401.309 states that the governing body of a city or county in this state may declare, by ordinance or resolution, that a state of emergency exists within the city or county. . Councilor Stacks was unable to locate a chain of command for the Wheeler. Paul Knight and Mayor Honeycut had started working on one. Councilor Stacks would like the other councilors to read the draft version and provide input to help develop it before the next council meeting. It is important for us to know who is in town and when.

Councilor Matthews asked if we are proposing a calendar. Councilor Stacks confirmed we do have a calendar in the City Hall office that can and should be used to track who is in town.

Paul Knight was originally directed by Mayor Honeycut to create the chain of command. The Mayor was concerned about staff knowing who to contact in the event of an emergency.

Councilor Ragnell questioned if a chain of command based on seniority would be as effective as a chain of command based on skillset. Councilor Stacks indicated that the order may need to be changed, but there needs to be some sort of formula.

In the event of an emergency, your first priority should be to take care of yourself and your family. Then check your road and neighborhood. When you get to City Hall it all kind of changes. If you are the first one in the building you are the Incident Commander no matter who you are. You are going to put the time you check in on the Incident Command Board and grab a packet. There is an emergency operation plan for the community. It has a list of who has what tools and who you should contact. Councilor Stacks conglomerated the ICS training info with the local regional info to make things as simple as possible. She then passed out packets and asked everyone to look through them.

As you come in to City Hall during an emergency, the Incident Commander will decide what is the most urgent and will assign you a job. Councilor Matthews wondered how best to assign roles if you didn't know each person's skillset. Councilor Stacks said that there is a job description in each packet, but that jobs can change as additional help becomes available. Councilor Matthews asked what happens if only 2 people arrive at City Hall. Mr. Knight confirmed that you do all the jobs until you have more help and then divide the jobs as more people arrive. You write down and track who came and when they came to help volunteer.

Councilor Stacks mentioned that none of us have all of these strengths, so there are forms to help explain each job. Councilor Ragnell asked when the WET Team should get involved. Councilor Stacks mentioned that you wouldn't necessarily call the WET Team. If there is an emergency, the first person picks up their stuff, reads what to do, and calls the County Commissioner Mary Faith Bell or their Emergency Management Person for Tillamook County as they are the only people who can declare an emergency. Use radios if phones are down. Each bag also has forms that have to be filled out in order to get reimbursement from FEMA. Some of these job descriptions don't have a lot of info, so Councilor Stacks wants to know what needs to be added or changed to these packets. Mr. Knight indicated that maps are critical for understanding where people and problems are located.

Councilor Matthews would like to have a checklist of what to do, in priority order, with contact information of who needs to be contacted.

Mr. Knight stated that there may need to be official documentation that indicates we can pay for services needed during an emergency. This is what the financial officer would work on.

Councilor Stacks stated that we need to know who is here so we can contact them and assign jobs down the list. Councilor Matthews asked what the "incident number" on the forms would be. Mr. Knight stated that if it is the first one, then it is incident #1. You walk in, fill out the Incident Command board, grab your kit, and figure out what you are supposed to do. The resource box has extra FEMA forms. These forms will speed up the process of getting the data properly organized. The box contains a disaster plan for the high school, a first aid book, and a trauma book among other things. The most important thing is the MOUs with the other cities and the county. These say

that we have a contractual agreement to share resources during an emergency.

Mr. Knight said that if you pass the baton to a new incident commander, you need to give them a full report of everything you have done and what to expect. The Incident Command board and both boxes are in Phil's office behind the filing cabinet. There will be 2 more created that will be in the shed and trailer.

Councilor Stacks pointed out the FEMA map doesn't just show floods, there is risk from fire, landslides, etc.

Councilor Ragnell expressed concern about all the written material. She has been through a fire and two floods. In that moment it is hard to focus on reading printed material. Councilor Stacks mentioned that she worked in the ER, and you need to read the patient chart to really know what is going on with the patient. She is trying to develop a sustainable, fluid system so that as people come and go there is still a functional plan in place. Mr. Knight mentioned that the written material is there to help you because your mind won't be on these things. In an emergency, your brain goes away. The written material can help you get done what needs to get done.

Councilor Stacks mentioned that our resource box is rudimentary. You will be working in multiple locations during an emergency and won't always have computer access right at your fingertips. Mr. Knight mentioned that intentions are great, but you need the tools in order to be successful. These boxes are full of "write in the rain" paper that can be written on with pencil even during wet weather.

Councilor Ragnell asked about having a list of townsfolk with certain skills and tools. Councilor Stacks said that this type of information is listed in "operations and logistics." At the "Map your Neighborhood" they found that addresses, phone numbers, etc., were hard to keep updated. At EVCNB, the operation plan tells you who has what tools and how to call them. But, each binder doesn't have the same information. It is very hard to keep track of things. But if you know your neighbor, you might know they have a chainsaw.

Mr. Knight said the first thing the old plan said was to "open the door and start the firetruck." It was way out of date. These are tools that will always be changing, but you will need them in an emergency because otherwise you won't know where to start.

Mayor Kemp asked if it was possible to have one packet with all the info rather than having one person come in and have to go through all six packets in order to find out what to do. The Nehalem Bay Emergency Plan created by EVCNB is 107 pages long, but has every bit of information you need to know. Perhaps it can be included in the resource box. Mr. Knight said there probably should be a top 10 list of things to do, in priority order. Mayor Kemp wanted to ensure that this packet would stay with the incident board and box and always be available. It would be a summary overview of what to do.

Mr. Knight indicated that if the Incident Commander left, they would need to assign a new person to be the Incident Commander. So long as the building is safe, it remains where the Incident Commander stays.

Councilor Matthews had a question about the assembly sites on the map. She indicated that Pennsylvania Ave needed to be moved up a couple blocks. Also, we should indicate the location of the trailer. There are also hazardous material spots, the one at the Care Center (propane), and one at the marinas. We need a way to keep these updated as well.

Councilor Stacks said that the EVCNB received a grant to evaluate buildings and places in the community where it would be possible to make temporary encampments. Catholic Relief Services came to do the study, and they checked to see how structurally sound the buildings were. They tried to determine how many people would be around seasonally and would potentially need shelter (including people just visiting the area). None of our buildings would survive a big earthquake.

Wheeler's emergency temporary encampment site will be upper Park. This is where the government will send helicopters and supplies. We will need to determine what we can actually do with our physical abilities and capabilities.

The WET Team went up and down every road and created maps of where they end and where the shut off valves are for the water system. There is an immense amount of strategic work to make at least Wheeler function. Other assembly sites are off of 3rd Street in the event of a disaster. Each site has a blue barrel full of supplies owned by the city. Inside you will find basic first aid, shelter supplies, hygiene, etc. There are contractual agreements with stewards in our neighborhood who agreed to store these on their property and to check them periodically to make sure they are secured. They are always accessible and are to serve as neighborhood outpost hubs.

Mr. Knight mentioned there are two main valves for Wheeler's water storage tanks. There are people who agreed to turn those off as soon as it is safe to do so. They then immediately notify Public Works of what was done. The water key is with an assigned person.

Mayor Kemp asked if there has been a discussion about temporary encampments at NCRD. Councilor Stacks confirmed that this is the shelter for Nehalem. Mr. Knight mentioned that they made their best guess for each assembly site to be a safe zone to be out of as big of a tsunami wave as they anticipate. Most are 100 feet in elevation. The state knows where these are by GPS location. Mayor Kemp clarified he meant the Care Center. Councilor Stacks mentioned that space is designated for NVCC evacuation and they can facilitate people in their parking lot (which can also serve as a helicopter pad).

After the Gervais Creek flood of 2016, a USDA grant was obtained. Part of it was for an updated computer system to track who actually still lives in Wheeler and how to contact them. Madi has assured Councilor Stacks that our current system keeps our consumer base up to date. We don't have emails, but we do have phone numbers. Madi clarified that the water billing account system is what is up to date. Therefore, we have the mailing addresses of the property owners, but don't necessarily have the contact information for renters.

Mayor Kemp asked about how this system is backed up. Madi confirmed that the water billing system is only backed up to the office computer. Everything else is on a cloud-based server and can be accessed from any computer (including the voter addresses). The RVS software is not cloud-based and there is no way to back it up the cloud. It can be backed up externally on a flash drive, but would then only work on a computer using the same software, so we'd need a flash drive that has that software on it as well. Madi said the voter registration information would tell you who is actually living in Wheeler, but she will have to double check to make sure the voter registration included phone numbers. Not everyone is registered to vote, so this still wouldn't be a perfect solution.

Councilor Matthews mentioned that in previous notifications we had to hang door tags to make sure the people living there get the notice. Councilor Ragnell mentioned that there are a lot of voters who aren't registered. Perhaps we should have a system that citizens can use to voluntarily

provide their contact information in the event of an emergency. Councilor Taylor said if we made it clear that this is for emergency use only people would be more likely to sign up for it. Mr. Knight suggested that we give them an example of an emergency, like a boil water notice.

Phil asked if there is a way to get Tillamook County to assist with an automatic call that would notify residents of a boil water notice. Madi mentioned that we should ask what other cities in the county do when they need to send out these types of notices. Councilor Stacks said she will look into it.

The emergency trailer has hygiene kits, 150 meals, and bedding for 30 people. It is checked regularly, and is located in the back parking lot of the Health District because we don't know where else to put it. The goal would be to place it where we could see Neahkahnie Mountain because it has communication equipment in it that would rely on line-of-sight connections. We don't want to put it at the Upper Park as the shed already has emergency equipment in it. Pennsylvania Ave doesn't have a clear line of sight. Councilor Stacks said the best place is a tiny piece of city-owned property off Second Street. Councilor Matthews asked if the trailer is secured. Councilor Stacks mentioned they've had it for about 6 years without incident. Councilor Matthews asked what the issue is with leaving the trailer where it is parked. Councilor Stacks replied that there has been pushback against us keeping it there, and then all our supplies are on the same side of town. Mr. Knight presented a memorandum of understanding to Councilor Porter to store it next to his house, but Councilor Porter declined as he uses that area as a driveway.

Councilor Ragnell mentioned an empty lot at the top of 2nd Street, and wondered if the owners would be willing to let the city use it to store the trailer.

Mayor Kemp asked why the trailer had to be moved. Councilor Stacks stated that the Health District asks regularly if we can move it as they intend to demolish that building.

Mayor Kemp asked if the ball on the trailer had a lock on it. Mr. Knight said it does.

Councilor Stacks stated that it should be able to be on city property. Mayor Kemp said he would ask Marc Johson of the Health District if he can leave the trailer there.

Mr. Knight mentioned that there are already emergency supplies on that side of town. It would be best to move the trailer to the north side.

The shed also has 150 meals, bedding for 50, etc. It is currently locked up and secured. City Hall can function as a day use shelter (it has 400 meals, and can sleep 30 people). It is not ideal, but it is what we have. The designated spot for the Incident Command Center would be Phil's office.

Everything is owned by the city, and the WET Team stays within budget and tries to do the best they can to get us prepared. We are actually better prepared than some of our neighboring cities.

Downstairs also has a yellow radio and medical supplies funded through the EVCNB. We are fortunate to have them.

Councilor Stacks is working on a resiliency hub grant opportunity and is advocating for one on this side of the river in Wheeler. Statewide \$10M in grants are available. There will be a second meeting in December where this will be discussed further. If Wheeler continues to get stuff, we need a place to put it where we can keep it safe and secure.

Mayor Kemp asked where the City Hall's medical supplies were located. There are 2 big totes with yellow tops in the cinderblock room behind Phil's office.

Councilor Stacks will take input from the councilors and will incorporate it so we can revisit the chain of command.

Councilor Matthews asked about the resiliency outline. A couple months ago they talked about it having the capacity to be a multi-purpose building. She questioned if an application had been put in yet. Councilor Stacks said no, the first step was for everyone to figure out what they want to ask for. Councilor Matthews asked about the possibility of a larger, regional "single ask." Mr. Knight mentioned that they are trying to collect information at this point to make their case to get the legislation passed to get the grant money. The money is generally ear-marked, but they are trying to figure out how to distribute it.

Councilor Stacks mentioned that they tried to make this place safe for employees to be. There are radios, go bags, etc. for employee use in the event of an emergency.

Councilor Ragnell asked if the paperwork that needs to be filled out is for FEMA reimbursement. Councilor Stacks confirmed that yes, it is for FEMA reimbursement. They reimburse equipment, gasoline, volunteer hours, etc. The paperwork helps us track all that and get reimbursement appropriately.

Mayor and Councilor Comments

Mayor Kemp thanked Heidi for all the hard work getting us prepared.

Adjournment

Mayor Kemp called the meeting to close at 3:45 PM.

Dated: November 30, 2023

Clif Kemp, Mayor

Pax Broder, City Manager/Recorder

Recorder: Pax Broder