



**City of Sweet Home  
Hazard Mitigation Committee**  
City Hall  
Conference Room  
1140 12<sup>th</sup> Ave.,  
Sweet Home, OR 97386

## **Hazard Mitigation Committee Meeting Minutes**

November 23, 2015

**Call to Order** at 3:35pm

**Attendance:** Planning Services Manager Laura LaRoque, Planning Assistant Katie Wilcox, Public Works Director Mike Adams, Councilor Jeffrey Goodwin, Planning Commissioner Edie Wilcox, Brent Gaskey

**Visitors:** Chief of Police Jeff Lynn, Fire Chief Dave Barringer, Cindy Rice, Sylvia Stock,

**Absent:**

### **Welcome and Introductions**

Planning Services Manager Laura LaRoque opened the discussion by summarizing the goals of the Hazard Mitigation Committee meeting. Laura explained that there are different types of hazards and that there were all-hazard approaches. She went on to list the four phases of emergency planning as mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery. She emphasized that the Hazard Mitigation Committee's main phase of concern would be mitigation.

### **2015-2020 Sweet Home Mitigation Plan Overview**

Planning Services Manager Laura LaRoque stated that FEMA, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, has existing plans for the federal, state, and local levels. She went on to explain that Sweet Home has its own plan that will be the focus of the Committee. She asked the group to review the synopsis and the general hazards. Laura asked that the group consider how those hazards apply to Sweet Home.

### **Existing mitigation / preparedness efforts in Sweet Home / Linn County**

Planning Services Manager Laura LaRoque invited the group to state their main concerns, one at a time, for discussion.

Councilor Jeffrey Goodwin expressed his concern with earthquakes, flooding, and the severity of those circumstances for Sweet Home. He explained that he worries about floodplain development, primarily in the Mill Site area along the river. He also asked if there were better areas to develop in order to mitigate a risk to the safety of citizens. He continued to explain that he would like to see the differences between a general floodplain and an emergency floodplain where the dams were breached.

Fire Chief Dave Barringer stated that there will be no perfect place to avoid reasonable risk. He explained that with a large scale emergency the best strategy would be for each individual household to be prepared to be self-sufficient for a period of time. He explained that depending on the scale of the disaster or emergency the timeline of emergency support response would vary. He explained communications may be down, radios may not work, power may go out, potable water may not be available, food and medical care might not be available, roads may not be accessible, and ultimately people need to be prepared for those circumstances. He stated that planning the set up and facilitation

of places like the high school and community center as temporary hospitals and shelters are something they can do now.

Councilor Jeffrey Goodwin asked if there were enough resources to take care of all the citizens that need help. He asked if the City would be able to provide food to the citizens while waiting for help.

Planning Services Manager Laura LaRoque stated that the City would not be able to provide food to everyone. She explained that it is important to look at it on an individual scale. She asked the Committee to consider what families can do to support themselves and if the City can support the families that cannot.

Councilor Jeffrey Goodwin suggested that the City may be able to support more people if they planned ahead. He continued by saying that he would like to evaluate the options of helping the masses for a short period of time versus helping small groups for a long period of time.

Chief of Police Jeff Lynn explained that he had three main concerns he wanted to express. His first concern is getting information out to the public on how they can be prepared for a disaster. His second concern is communication aspects and how to communicate with federal agencies for support. His third concern was the lack of fuel reserves in the City. He estimated that the Police would be out of fuel in two days. He also expressed concern about the firetrucks and ambulances needing fuel as well.

Brent Gaskey explained that the Lebanon Fire Department has their own fuel tanks that are backed up by generators so if need be they have their own reserve. He stated that this is possibly something that would not be a large cost to incur by the City of Sweet Home, but greatly beneficial.

Public Works Director Mike Adams stated that his main concern is to understand what role the City would take. He asked what component of the Hazard Mitigation plan the City should take charge of.

Planning Services Manager Laura LaRoque stated that her main concern was for those who are currently struggling to get food on a day to day basis. She explained that she is concerned about people and families who do not have the capacity other families may have and what can be done to meet those needs. Laura stated she also wanted to evaluate what regulations can be put into effect to make sure people are not locating in hazardous areas.

Brent Gaskey explained his background in hazardous and emergency situations. He feels that he could be a valuable resource for the committee and just wanted to offer himself as a source of information.

Planning Assistant Katie Wilcox stated that her primary concerns were mainly around people who cannot help themselves. She would like to see preparation for the care and transportation of children who could be in school when a disaster strikes, elderly who live alone, and the homeless or kids who spend a lot of their times on the streets as they would be exposed. She asked what resources can be provided to them. She stated that her other concern was an updated plan of action for the City Staff FEMA responders.

Fire Chief Dave Barringer explained that there are different hazard situations that have already been assessed and planned for by different organizations. He stated that since those plans were in place his main concern is with a large earthquake. He explained that at a certain point people will want to start organizing and helping once the disaster has hit and that there should be a plan to organize that situation. He stated he has concerns about the needs of nursing homes. He explained he had concerns with whether or not they have sufficient amounts of oxygen and similar medical supplies. Dave explained that he would like to know how they can work with Public Works in order to open roads that would be closed due to a catastrophic event.

Public Works Director Mike Adams stated that it is possible to have a crew ready but noted that if it is not during work hours it would be difficult getting the staff together.

Planning Commissioner Edie Wilcox stated that her main concern started many years ago with Foster School being located under Foster Dam. She mentioned that she has continued to gather information over the years and talk with concerned citizens about preparing themselves for a disaster. She mentioned that she has concerns about the elderly who live around her and she has planned on how she can help them in an emergency. She would like to see overall emergency preparedness for the community in general.

Sylvia Stock explained that she is attending the meeting as a concerned citizen, mom, neighbor, and as a member of SHEM, Sweet Home Emergency Ministries. She said that since the issue of a large earthquake has been brought to her attention recently she would like to start learning more about emergency preparedness. She said she would like to network with neighborhoods, churches and other community groups to begin planning for preparedness.

Cindy Rice explained that she is a member of SHEM as well. She stated that SHEM has the ability to be operational to the extent of the supplies they would have in stock. She explained that SHEM already has a small scale emergency plan that incorporates two other food pantries in Sweet Home. She explained that in an emergency with no power all perishable items from the other pantries would be moved to SHEM's location and be disbursed or stored. She stated that they have a back-up generator for power and they are centrally located between City Hall and the Fire Department. Cindy continued to explain that the people they serve will not be prepared for any disaster. She explained that SHEM does keep a limited stock of water purification devices, and they have a small supply of emergency blankets, but the amount is a small fraction of what would be needed. She explained that in a regular month they currently push about 30,000lbs of food into Sweet Home when open three days a week. She mentioned that if there were a way to stock pile MREs (Meals Ready to Eat) there would be a storage issue as they do not have enough space.

Councilor Jeffrey Goodwin explained that he knows there are people who are already prepared. What he is concerned about is making sure there is a plan to take care of the people who cannot get food, shelter, and water. He explained he wants to develop a plan for what can be implemented over a few years and start obtaining needed resources.

Planning Services Manager Laura LaRoque thanked everyone for their input and sharing.

## **2016 Action Items**

Planning Services Manager Laura LaRoque stated that overall she heard a lot of comments on providing information to the public and asked if the group if they would like to hold a community forum to inform and train the public on what to do in the event of an emergency. She then went on to state that she also heard a lot of comments on assessing what supplies the city has and what supplies they could accumulate to be more prepared.

Planning Commissioner Edie Wilcox asked if the elementary schools had generators.

Chief of Police Jeff Lynn stated that the High School is the only school he knows of that has a generator and that it would power the gym and the cafeteria.

Planning Commissioner Edie Wilcox mentioned Safeway and Thriftway may have generators.

Planning Services Manager Laura LaRoque mentioned that these are great questions to start asking within the community.

Planning Commissioner Edie Wilcox mentioned that SHEM will most likely be inundated immediately after a disaster.

Brent Gaskey explained that typically if the power is out people will begin to congregate wherever they see lights on.

Planning Services Manager Laura LaRoque asked those with more formal emergency response training if they believe a good first step would be to hold a community forum and get information out.

Chief of Police Jeff Lynn stated that it would be a good start to hold meetings to train and inform the public but it would need to be a consistent and continuous effort to push information out.

Planning Commissioner Edie Wilcox mentioned that the Community Watch groups were a great resource. She explained there were about fifteen or more groups that work together. She said she would like to find a contact person for each group and work with them.

Planning Services Manager Laura LaRoque mentioned that there is a program called "Map my Neighborhood" where you can work with your neighbors to plan for emergencies.

Cindy Rice explained that websites and social media is an amazing way to get information out and may be a good resource.

Councilor Jeffrey Goodwin explained that churches would be an excellent way to get information out, as there are many in town.

Planning Commissioner Edie Wilcox mentioned that there were a lot of bars in town that could be used to get the information out.

Cindy Rice asked if there was any specific information on the city website about emergency preparedness.

Planning Services Manager Laura LaRoque said that currently there was not information on the website. She stated that putting information up on the website could be one of the first steps they take in informing the public.

Brent Gaskey explained that assessment of what the average citizen believes they can do for themselves and what they expect the City to do for them in an emergency was important. He said that information can be handed out to these community groups and organizations letting people know what they would be expected to do for their own survival.

Planning Services Manager Laura LaRoque mentioned that she liked the idea of evaluating the need and setting expectations for the citizens.

Brent Gaskey said that he believed a lot of people are unaware of these issues.

Planning Commissioner Edie Wilcox asked Fire Chief Dave Barringer if he has had people come to him looking for help and information with earthquakes and flooding.

Fire Chief Dave Barringer said that there were a few people who had expressed concern.

Planning Services Manager Laura LaRoque stated that not everyone will come to a community forum, and that getting information out to community organizations may be a good two-pronged approach.

Fire Chief Dave Barringer said that he believed it would be important that the messages being sent out between the Fire Station, the Police Department and City Hall should be the same.

Planning Services Manager Laura LaRoque reiterated that overall there is a lot of work that needs to be done. She asked the group if their interest is in getting information out or in working to connect community members with existing resources and mapping those resources. She also asked if anyone would be interested in putting on a forum or reviewing a website for the correct information.

Brent Gaskey stated that he would be willing to work on the website information.

Planning Services Manager Laura LaRoque asked if anyone had any other actions they would like to forward move with.

Sylvia Stock said that the scope of information is tremendous. She explained that if they could have a condensed version of how to prepare for a disaster with an action plan for families, churches or organizations that would be a good start.

Councilor Jeffrey Goodwin explained that he believed that before a community forum is held he would like to see some scenarios ran hypothetically so that he may properly answer the questions of the citizens. He explained that until the group comes to a solid decision of what is expected of the City they should not go to the community until it is worked out.

Planning Services Manager Laura LaRoque explained that those decisions can best be made with input from the community.

Planning Commissioner Edie Wilcox said that she would like to let the community know that the plan is being started and then ask them for suggestions and feedback. Edie also stated that she believed asking for community feedback on three major disaster situations would be a good start.

Councilor Jeffrey Goodwin agreed with Edie's ideas.

Chief of Police Jeff Lynn stated that he believed the group should do two things; give the community a general idea of what they would need in a generic crisis situation and plan for different scenarios.

Brent Gaskey asked Chief of Police Jeff Lynn and Fire Chief Dave Barringer if they practice Emergency Operation Center scenarios currently. He explained that Lebanon has done practice runs of setting up an operation with the police, fire department and city staff.

Chief of Police Jeff Lynn stated that the Police Department has practiced similar scenarios on a smaller scale, but they have not practiced on a larger scale.

Fire Chief Dave Barringer stated that he is mainly concerned with planning those scenarios as that would be his major role during a crisis.

Planning Services Manager Laura LaRoque explained that these practice scenarios and community wide efforts would go hand in hand. She explained that the two separate actions, each with different people, would be coordinated together.

Sylvia Stock noted that she was also interested in grants for emergency preparedness.

Cindy Rice asked if anyone knew of any grants for this cause.

Planning Services Manager Laura LaRoque explained that the Oregon Community Foundation and the Ford Foundation has grants in these areas. She explained that FEMA may also be a good resource.

Planning Commissioner Edie Wilcox mentioned reaching out to companies like Oregon Freeze Dry for donations.

Planning Services Manager Laura LaRoque stated that with the information discussed she believes there are some points of action that can now be starting points, such as getting the website up, coordinating with other departments, and reaching out to the community.

Sylvia Stock asked what kind of resources the County would provide since they have an emergency plan in place. She asked if they would be a resource for evacuation routes from Sweet Home.

Planning Services Manager Laura LaRoque explained that the County may have a plan but she would have to look into more information on emergency routes. She explained that usually in a large scale event most main corridors would likely be damaged.

Sylvia Stock stated that she would like to see exit routes to avoid hazardous locations around the state.

Planning Commissioner Edie Wilcox mentioned that the group should also consider how to reach people on the north side of the river, if something happened to the bridges.

Planning Services Manager Laura LaRoque said she can look into some options for that circumstance.

Public Works Director Mike Adams stated that when he was involved with the County he understood that their plan took into consideration which cities have their own plan and are considered as self-sufficient. He also added they considered what would happen if an emergency causes the population from one area to move to another. He continued by explaining that while an event may not directly affect the Sweet Home area, the City could be impacted by an influx of people leaving another area. He stated that the City should look into what they are obligated to do for mitigation and getting

the information out to the community, but to also emphasize that the City cannot carry the weight of the entire disaster. He emphasized explaining to the community that the City may be able to help under certain circumstances, but encourage people to also plan for themselves.

Planning Assistant Katie Wilcox asked if he would like to see an approach of what the City can do right now to help people and families become sustainable.

Public Works Director Mike Adams agreed and explained that what resources are available can differ between departments and circumstances. He explained that he can have an action plan for public works, but that would only work if they can all report in and if the crew could then access needed areas. He asked what is expected of people as a neighbor, as a citizen and as a human being.

Councilor Jeffrey Goodwin explained that for the City it is going to come down to a budget issue and that it would be a very politically charged issue. He stated that he would support this cause in the budget. He stated that getting information out is a more tangible first step towards preparedness as it is something that can be done now.

Planning Services Manager Laura LaRoque noted that the meeting had currently run over time. She said she would like to meet again after the New Year and would be in contact with everyone.

**Adjournment** at 4:40pm