

FIRE COMMITTEE MINUTES

October 10, 2005

The Fire Committee of the City of Mesa met in the lower level meeting room of the Council Chambers, 57 East 1st Street, on October 10, 2005 at 3:08 p.m.

COMMITTEE PRESENT

Mike Whalen, Chairman
Rex Griswold
Janie Thom

COUNCIL PRESENT

Mayor Keno Hawker

STAFF PRESENT

Mike Hutchinson

1. Discuss and consider the development of a Citizen Corps Council for the City of Mesa.

Fire Chief Harry Beck advised that the Citizen Corps Council is a part of the Federal government's effort to engage local governments in planning for emergency management issues. He introduced Assistant Fire Chief Paul Carbajal and Police Volunteer Coordinator Linda Bailey.

Assistant Chief Carbajal displayed a PowerPoint presentation (a copy is available for review in the City Clerk's Office) and explained that the Fire Department's Emergency Management Division and the Mesa Police Department are working together to develop a Citizen Corps Council in order to promote and strengthen community programs. He advised that implementing a Citizen Corps Council would create the groundwork for long-term neighborhood security and improve the City's eligibility for grants.

Ms. Bailey stated that the Citizen Corps is a part of the USA Freedom Corps, which was formed by the Federal government shortly after 9-11 in order to enhance the efforts of first responders to a disaster. She reported that several existing programs in the City fall under the Citizen Corps designation, including Volunteers in Police Service, Neighborhood Watch, Citizen Emergency Response Team (CERT), Medical Reserve Corps and the Fire Corps. Ms. Bailey advised that the goal is to make the community safer and stronger by training and preparing individuals to take care of their families and their neighborhoods during the first 72 hours of a major event.

Ms. Bailey said that Mesa's Volunteers in Police Service (VIPS) Program has been in place for 15 years with 100 trained volunteers providing assistance in many areas of community policing. She explained that these volunteers are being trained to provide disaster assistance in two areas:

- First Responder Assistance, which includes perimeter security, building evacuation, missing person searches, traffic control and evidence recognition/preservation.
- Staffing Reporting Centers, which includes checking in VIPS personnel, processing spontaneous citizen volunteers, deployment, staffing the public information center and phone banks, and providing referrals to other agencies.

Ms. Bailey reported that Mesa has partnered with the Tempe Police Department regarding the training for the Assistance in Disaster (AID) program, which further enhances each community's ability to provide mutual aid during an emergency.

Chief Carbajal explained that the CERT teams are trained to assist their families and neighbors in the areas of disaster preparedness, fire safety, medical operations, and light search and rescue operations. He advised that last year several of Mesa's CERT volunteers provided assistance to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in Florida following a hurricane. Chief Carbajal added that the goals of CERT include training citizens to respond to emergency situations, identifying the actions that are beyond their skills and should not be taken, providing an increased citizen understanding of first responder services, and improving community relations. He emphasized that no one municipality has all the resources necessary to address a disaster, and he noted that the organized support of the community is necessary.

Chief Carbajal stated that the Fire Corps is the component under Citizen Corps that supports the Fire Department in non-operational and non-suppression related activities.

Ms. Bailey stated that AID and CERT are complementary to each other. She added that AID volunteers have completed the same background process as civilian Police Department employees.

Ms. Bailey advised that she serves on the State Citizen Corps Council. She stated that the mission of a proposed Mesa Citizen Corps Council would be to establish a partnership between Public Safety and Mesa's citizens in order to ensure that Mesa is safer, stronger and better prepared to handle disasters of all kinds. Ms. Bailey explained that the activities of the Citizen Corps Council would include identification of community-wide resources and needs, promoting citizen education and participation, and community outreach. She noted that the Emergency Operations Office has binders listing resources for disaster response recovery, but volunteers are needed to update the information with contact names and telephone numbers. Ms. Bailey listed the various organizations and groups that would be represented on Mesa's Citizen Corps Council. She further advised that establishing a Citizen Corps Council would increase Mesa's eligibility for Federal grant funding, avoid gaps in service or duplication of services in the community, increase community involvement and volunteerism, and maximize the first responders' resources and budget.

Chief Carbajal stated that staff is seeking the Council's support regarding the formation of a Citizen Corps Council, and that staff is requesting that a Councilmember be designated as a representative to serve on the Citizen Corps Council.

City Manager Mike Hutchinson stated that staff would prepare a list of potential candidates to serve on the Citizen Corps Council.

Committeemember Griswold suggested that representatives of the medical community be included in the list of potential Citizen Corps Council participants.

In response to a question from Committeemember Thom, Chief Carbajal stated that the Federal grant funds are not large amounts, but the funds are sufficient to address the necessary costs to operate various programs. He noted that in the past the CERT Program experienced a gap in training and continuing education when the department lost funding for the CERT Coordinator position. Chief Carbajal emphasized that CERT is a very important program.

Discussion ensued relative to the fact that the City must have a Citizen Corps Council in order to be eligible to receive certain types of grant funding; that this may be the proper time to implement the program because of recent national events; and that a pool of retired first responders are present in the community who could be involved in the effort.

Ms. Bailey noted that Police and Fire Department representatives have discussed the process required to implement a Citizen Corps Council, and she added that the tentative plan proposes quarterly meetings.

It was moved by Committeemember Thom, seconded by Committeemember Griswold, that the proposal for the formation of a Mesa Citizen Corps Council be moved forward to the full Council with a recommendation for approval.

Carried unanimously.

Chairman Whalen thanked staff for the presentation.

2. Hear an update on the development of a Level One Trauma Center in the East Valley.

Deputy Fire Chief Kenny King referred to the Council Report that detailed the need for a Level One Trauma Center in the East Valley. He reported that the Valley has six trauma centers, five of which are located in Phoenix and one in Scottsdale. Chief King advised that Banner Desert plans to convert their existing pediatric emergency room into a trauma center when the Children's Hospital is constructed. He noted that establishing and equipping a trauma center is very expensive, and that recruiting the specialized medical staff required for a trauma center would be very difficult.

In response to a question from Chairman Whalen, Chief Beck stated that Banner Desert is presently the central location for the East Valley, but he noted that the situation could change as additional growth occurs to the east. He added that local fire chiefs have discussed the future need for an additional trauma center in the East Valley.

Discussion ensued relative to the fact that all East Valley hospitals are rated as Level Two trauma centers; that last year Mesa transported approximately 1,000 patients to Level One trauma centers; that paramedics are able to communicate with trauma centers prior to transporting a patient; and that Banner Desert is projecting that the Children's Hospital will be constructed by 2008, at which time the development of a Level One Trauma Center could be addressed at that location.

Responding to a question from Committeemember Griswold, Chief King confirmed that Banner Desert has a helicopter pad.

Chairman Whalen thanked Chief King for the update.

3. Hear an update on evacuation plans for the City of Mesa and Maricopa County.

Chief Carbajal advised that this update is in response to a recent Council request for additional information on evacuation planning. He stated that due to the nature of some disasters, the City might not be physically capable of handling all requests for evacuation assistance. He added that evacuation assistance might be available within hours or it might take days. Chief Carbajal further stated that residents should plan to be self-sufficient for at least the first 72 hours of any disaster.

Chief Beck advised that disasters occur in many different ways. He added that Mesa's evacuation assistance plan is typical of plans in many areas of the country, and that the Fire Department would respond to the best of their ability.

Chief Carbajal noted that the packet of materials provided to the Committee regarding evacuation plans included the "Individual Preparedness For Disasters" document (see Attachment). He advised that the information was provided to all City employees and that copies will be included with the November utility statements.

Chief Carbajal utilized the scenario of a Roosevelt Dam rupture as an example of a possible disaster in the Valley. He advised that areas in northwest Mesa near the Salt River and the City of Tempe would be most impacted in the event this scenario occurred, but he noted that most of Mesa would not be affected by flooding. Chief Carbajal stated that staff continues to work with other City departments, the State, County and neighboring communities regarding emergency preparedness and evacuation plans. He noted that Mesa has a very effective Intelligent Transportation System that can turn all lights green in one direction and coordinate left-hand turn signals, but Apache Junction and Gilbert do not have this type of system. Chief Carbajal added that a high potential for traffic gridlock exists because all highways from the Phoenix metropolitan area eventually become one or two-lane roads.

Chief Carbajal stated that Maricopa County has the ability to access cable channels in the event of an emergency, but Mesa is presently the only municipality in the Valley with that capability. He stated that following joint meetings with the County and other agencies, the City's draft emergency plans would be updated.

In response to questions from Chairman Whalen, Chief Carbajal stated that all possible scenarios are addressed in the City's plan. He noted that the responsibility for a decision to evacuate would depend upon the emergency and the area affected. He explained that the City of Mesa would be the decision-maker relative to a local incident and, if necessary, other communities will provide support. Chief Carbajal noted that an incident at the Palo Verde Power Plant is not likely to affect Mesa directly due to the fact that Mesa is outside of the 40 mile perimeter that would be impacted. He advised that the possibility of a pandemic flu has been addressed by emergency response agencies for a number of years and that protective equipment is available for first responders. Chief Carbajal further advised that a task force is

being formed to develop a Citywide plan for employees and the community in the event of a pandemic.

Chief Beck stated the opinion that Valley communities are prepared to handle and coordinate emergency situations as a result of their joint planning meetings and activities.

Committeemember Griswold expressed appreciation to the Fire Department staff for their prompt response to the Council's request for updated information.

Chief Carbajal expressed the opinion that the most likely emergency scenario would be the influx of people to the Valley from California as the result a major earthquake.

Chairman Whalen thanked Chief Beck and Chief Carbajal for the information.

4. Adjournment.

Without objection, the Fire Committee meeting adjourned at 4:07 p.m.

I hereby certify that the foregoing minutes are a true and correct copy of the minutes of the meeting of the Fire Committee of the City of Mesa, Arizona, held on the 10th day of October 2005. I further certify that the meeting was duly called and held and that a quorum was present.

BARBARA JONES, CITY CLERK

baa

Attachment

Individual Preparedness For Disasters

Individual preparedness is crucial for citizens and their families before a storm or disaster situation. Residents should be prepared with 72 hours of supplies. Following is a list of actions that individuals should undertake and supplies to gather before a disaster occurs.

Before a Disaster Occurs:

Have disaster supplies on hand, including:

- Flashlight, portable battery-operated radio and extra batteries
- First-aid kit
- Emergency food and water (including a non-electric can opener)
- Essential medicines
- Cash and credit cards
- Sturdy shoes and a change of clothing
- Copies of important papers (bank statements, insurance records, deeds, etc.)

When a Disaster Occurs:

- Listen to news progress reports. Follow instructions if ordered to evacuate.
- Check your emergency supplies. Store drinking water in clean bathtubs, jugs, bottles and available cooking pots.
- Turn the refrigerator and freezer to the coldest settings if not instructed by officials to turn off utilities.
- Fuel your car. Gather your disaster supply kit.
- Store valuables and personal papers in a waterproof container.
- Review your family disaster plan. (For more information: www.ready.gov)

If You Are Told To Evacuate:

- If officials order evacuation, leave as soon as possible. Avoid flooded roads and watch for washed-out bridges.
- Secure your home.
- Take your pre-assembled emergency supplies and warm, protective clothing.

For more information on emergency preparedness, please visit www.ready.gov.