

Meeting Summary

West Linn Public Safety Advisory Board (PSAB)

March 16, 2021

Call to Order & Introductions: The meeting was called to order at 6:02 pm by Chairman, Tom Freedland. Members and staff attending were Kris Duncan, Austin Rufener, Michael Carlsen, Charlie Mathews, Acting Chief Peter Mahuna (WLPD), Stefan Myers (TVFR), Toni Swanberg (WLPD) and City Manager, Jerry Gabrielatos. Also attending were Kim Bria, Ben Varadi, Gregory Smith, Traciee Thomas, Ryan Brinkley, Bruce Johnson and Bill Ramirez. PSAB members approved the agenda as presented.

Approval of Written Record: WLPD Admin Asst. Toni Swanberg announced that the audio recording of the 2/24/21 PSAB meeting had been restored and posted along with the written summary. The audio and written record of the 2/24/21 PSAB meeting was approved by unanimous consent.

SPECIAL FEATURE – PUBLIC FORUM ON RECENT DISASTER

Tom F. introduced Kris Duncan, who assisted the last PSAB Disaster Preparedness Coordinator, Judy Wiechmann. Kris started the forum by sharing her own early experience in West Linn as a child when a wind storm left them without power for nearly two weeks. She invited public members to share their personal experience in the recent ice storm, describe the role neighbors played and offer ideas for how the city could improve its response given its limited resources.

Kim B. described her childhood experience in Wisconsin when a severe ice storm crippled their rural community. As a result, she has always kept a store of food supplies that might otherwise appear excessive. As soon as it was safe for her to venture out, she transported hot water bottles and other food by wagon to her neighbors. She believes the City did well to muster resources, but communication about those resources was a huge challenge.

Traciee T., who lives in the vicinity of Mary S. Young, said the sound of all the crashing trees the first couple of nights was very frightening with no lighting or means to get information on what to expect next. She commended the response of neighbors to share resources and come forward with chain saws to do what they could to reopen Highway 43. She agreed with the previous speaker that better communication on where people could go to get what they needed would have been helpful.

Charlie M. shared his “lessons learned” as a result of leaving his home for warmer conditions. He said he intends to develop a checklist that will include making sure there is no potential for the icemaker to damage his floors. He also will devise a system so he knows not to attempt to use his garage door opener when power is restored until he has removed the manual deadbolt.

Gregory S. was so concerned about his 95 year old mother, who was living in a congregate facility on River Road, he walked the entire distance from his home in Willamette Park. He described his disappointment and concern to learn there is no requirement that long term care facilities keep a back-up generator. At one point he was no longer able to communicate with his wife back in West Linn, but was grateful to be able to arrange for WL Police to conduct a welfare check. He also described the efforts of another neighbor, "Kenny" who took a large generator door-to-door to ensure food did not spoil in their refrigerators.

Ben V. shared his extensive exposure to disasters having grown up in upstate New York where severe snowstorms were common. He was also in Washington DC when 9/11 occurred and spent a great deal of time in New Orleans responding to hurricanes and a major oil spill. Although he was fairly well prepared to manage during the ice storm, he said the one thing he had not purchased since moving to West Linn was a chainsaw. So when a tree crashed on his driveway, neighbors came to his aid. Ben also commented on how difficult it was to learn where and what services were available. Having worked in a Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) elsewhere, he would like to see that kind of group form here.

Tom F. described the difficulty he and his wife encountered trying to travel home from a trip out of town. Upon arrival, they found a tree had smashed into their garage where all their disaster equipment was stored. Still recovering from back surgery, Tom said they opted for a hotel stay. Tom outlined the many discussions PSAB has had regarding a CERT program in West Linn, including one at the last meeting in February where Stefan Myers from Tualatin Valley Fire & Rescue noted the need for a city/county official to ensure continuity and success. Regarding the communication issue, Tom recalled that in Irvine, CA, the local police would use of a low power AM radio station to distribute information during emergencies.

Ryan B. asked whether an Everbridge system had been considered. He suggested this might be very useful as it offers a variety of ways to send notifications. Ben V. offered that he had some experience with building low power radio communication. It was agreed that more discussion is needed on this topic.

Kris D. gave a short presentation on the new approach PSAB is taking to assisting the community to be better prepared for the next disaster. In the past, PSAB has utilized the Map Your Neighborhood (MYN) format developed after the California earthquakes. After many years of promotion, PSAB members continually struggled to recruit neighborhood "captains" to assemble their self-help group, determine their boundaries and complete the training. PSAB is now developing a Covid-friendly alternative service that is more individualized and customizable. West Linn Ready will offer consultations and guidance to individual households from "seasoned" citizens such as those who have been through CERT training, conducted MYN activities or have other disaster response experience. She encouraged all who had spoken tonight with such experience to volunteer to be added to the "on call" roster. Kris emphasized that the intent is not to preclude community/neighbor organization efforts, but to have something to offer to individuals who want to start by improving their own preparedness first. Those interested in volunteering or requesting assistance should reach out via Email to westlinnready@gmail.com.

Kim B. recalled that there has been discussion by the City before of the need for an Emergency Manager. She suggested that now would be a good time to revisit that recommendation.

Tom F. encouraged all who participated in tonight's topical forum to continue attending PSAB meetings, especially as we regroup and roll out these new programs. The next meeting will be on April 28, 2021 at 6pm.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 7:18 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Kris Duncan (PSAB member)