



Item No. 7

Town of Atherton

CITY COUNCIL STAFF REPORT – REGULAR AGENDA

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

FROM: GEORGE RODERICKS, CITY MANAGER

DATE: MARCH 19, 2025

SUBJECT: REVIEW AND DISCUSS POLICY ISSUES RELATED TO EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Council review and discuss policy issues related to emergency preparedness.

BACKGROUND

At the February 19 City Council meeting a member of the Council provided a Council Report on issues related to emergency preparedness. The Report include a report out on various meetings and trainings related to fire response, fire prevention, home hardening, emergency response systems, and new regulations. The Report recommended that the Council discuss issues related to:

- Educating the public on emergency preparedness, fire safety, and fire prevention
- Examining the Town's role and relationship with ADAPT and CERT

Following the Report, the Council suggested that the item be returned to Council for discussion. However, the Council did not specifically articulate any specific issues for discussion or research by staff in advance.

ANALYSIS

Absent specific direction by the Council, below is an attempt to create a few policy level discussion questions for the Council's consideration along with some generalized information around the Town's emergency management training and programs.

1. The Council should discuss and provide direction and feedback to staff with respect to specific engagement with the Fire District on the priorities and requirements of the Fire Hazard Severity Zones as they relate to Atherton. Public engagement and education would flow from any specific direction from the Council.

Current Status: Recent Cal Fire decisions have determined that the Town **is not** in a High Fire Hazard Severity Zone. Nevertheless, the Fire District is drafting recommendations for best practices that will be shared with the Town and community. Some of these best practice recommendations may be incorporated as requirements at the discretion of the Town. On March 13 a Community Forum was hosted by the Town, the Fire District and ADAPT to educate the community about best practices, recent fire experience (LA Fires), and general emergency preparedness.

2. The Council should discuss and provide direction and feedback to staff with respect to updates to the Heritage Tree Ordinance to address overlaps related to tree canopy and pyro phobic vegetation.

Current Status: Updates to the Heritage Tree Ordinance are on the planning schedule for this year with the Planning Commission. Part of those updates will include discussion related to eucalyptus trees, redwood trees, appeals, and other minor updates. Meetings of the Commission are public and updates to the Ordinance will be promulgated via a Public Hearing process.

3. The Council should discuss and provide direction and feedback to staff with respect to the level of support for ADAPT and/or CERT and direct staff with respect to any police level changes.

Current Status: CERT (Community Emergency Response Teams) is a program managed by the Fire District. The CERT Program trains community members in basic disaster response skills such as small fire suppression, light search and rescue and disaster medical operations. The Town and Fire District engage CERT volunteers when needed in the event of a disaster response. ADAPT (Atherton Disaster and Preparedness Team) is an all-volunteer group of residents that partner with the Town to educate, communicate with, and aid fellow residents in preparing for major emergencies and natural disasters. ADAPT's focus is on personal preparedness versus CERT's focus on emergency response. The Town recognizes ADAPT as a "designated group" and co-sponsors trainings, events, and local activities and programs in support of disaster preparedness education. ADAPT is an evolution of the State's Get Ready! Program. In addition to staff time and resources, the Town budgets approximately \$10,000 per year in support of emergency preparedness programs promulgated mostly via ADAPT – disaster bins for assembly points, neighborhood radios, ham radio support, emergency supply trailers, and training meetings.

Staff Training

Town staff are required to attend training courses hosted by FEMA at varying levels. Over the years, these have evolved from Standardized Emergency Management Systems (SEMS) training by the State to National Incident Management Systems (NIMS) courses via FEMA and the Department of Homeland Security and Center for Domestic Preparedness. At a basic level, staff receive training on:

- IS-700 NIMS, An Introduction – An introduction to the NIMS concept using a consistent nationwide template to enable all government, private-sector, and nongovernmental organizations to work together during domestic incidents.

- ICS-100 Introduction to the Incident Command System – Foundation for higher level training on the Incident Command System. The course describes the history, features and principles, and organizational structure of the system. The course describes the relationship between ICS and NIMS.

It is recommended that Councilmembers attend the IS-700 and ICS-100 as well.

As staff take on responsibility within the Town's Emergency Operations Center at the various levels of authority within each of the five (5) sections, staff receive more specific training.

Courses include:

- ICS 200 – Basic Incident Command and Response
- IS 701 – Interstate Mutual Aid
- IS 2200 – Basic EOC Functions
- IS 800 – National Response Framework
- ICS 300 – ICS for Expanding Incidents
- ICS 400 – Advanced ICS
- E/L 950 – All-Hazards Positions – Incident Command
- E/L 952 – All-Hazards Positions – Public Information Officer
- E/L 954 – All-Hazards Positions – Public Safety Officer
- E/L 958 – All-Hazards Positions – Operations Section Chief
- E/L 962 – All-Hazards Positions – Planning Section Chief
- E/L 967 – All-Hazards Positions – Logistics Section Chief
- E/L 973 – All-Hazards Positions – Finance Section Chief

In addition, a number of staff, to include the City Manager, have been trained directly by FEMA and/or the Department of Homeland Security and their Center for Domestic Preparedness on emergency response. Courses have included Biological Incident Awareness, Threat Assessment, All-Hazards Threat Response, Emergency Medical Response Awareness for CBRNE Incidents, Mass Casualty Incident Response, Medical Surge, HazMat Response Planning and Management, and Hands-On Training for CBRNE incidents.

The Town maintains an Emergency Operations Plan and an Emergency Response Handbook that address local emergency response protocols based on an All-Hazards Response methodology. The Handbook and Operations Plan integrates Fire, CERT and ADAPT along with other governmental and non-governmental groups in response. EOC Training is conducted annually to ensure that staff are aware of their role within the EOC upon deployment.

Staff is present to answer questions that may arise. As noted, since the request for policy review was specific, the above is provided as a general summary. However, should the Council wish to have more in depth discussion of any of the areas, staff can prepare a more detailed report and analysis.

FISCAL IMPACT

None

GOAL ALIGNMENT

This Report and its contents are in alignment with the following Council Policy Goals:

- Goal Area G – Emergency Preparedness – Be Prepared

POLICY FOCUS

Policy discussion should focus on the three (3) highlighted areas for discussion.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Public notification was achieved by posting the agenda, with this agenda item being listed, at least 72 hours prior to the meeting in print and electronically. Information about the project is also disseminated via the Town's electronic News Flash and Atherton Online. There are approximately 1,200 subscribers to the Town's electronic News Flash publications. Subscribers include residents as well as stakeholders –to include, but be not limited to, media outlets, school districts, Menlo Park Fire Protection District, service providers (water, power, and sewer), and regional elected officials.

COMMISSION/COMMITTEE FEEDBACK/REFERRAL

This item has not been before a Town Committee or Commission

ATTACHMENTS

None.