



# Joint Meeting Minutes

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## Menlo Park Fire Protection District and the

## Town of Atherton City Council

### Special Meeting

December 12, 2017

5:00 PM

Holbrook-Palmer Park, Jennings Pavilion  
150 Watkins Avenue, Atherton, CA 94027

### Minutes

#### ROLL CALL

**Board Members:** Peter F. Carpenter, Board President, Robert J. Silano, Vice President  
Robert Jones, Director, Chuck Bernstein, Director, Virginia Chang Kiraly, Director

**Council Members:** Michael Lempres, Mayor, Cary Wiest, Vice Mayor  
Bill Widmer, Councilmember, Elizabeth Lewis, Councilmember, Rick DeGolia, Councilmember

#### PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

**PUBLIC COMMENT #1** – None.

#### REGULAR AGENDA

##### 1. Urban Interface Fire Planning/Disaster Planning & Lessons Learned

Fire Chief Harold Schapelhouman summarized the Districts urban interface fire/disaster planning and lessons learned from a number of incidents through a PowerPoint presentation, titled, North Bay Fires 2017.

Deputy Chief Don Long reviewed and discussed the Districts response to the October North Bay fires. Chief Long discussed contributing factors to the North Bay fires including fuel, weather, topography and landscaping and the potential for it happening on the Peninsula. Long discussed how to prepare for an event similar to it.

Fire Marshall Jon Johnston discussed what was learned from the North Bay fires and what can be done to avoid similar events and improve survivability in a disaster. Johnston discussed California Fire Codes and building construction considerations from lessons learned. He noted that a simple first step is to approve an ordinance that requires only Class A roofs only. This will provide protection from blowing embers. There was further discussion on enhancing building construction codes.

Division Chief Jim Stevens discussed his intent to invite each municipality within the District to a meeting to discuss and develop an intergovernmental Disaster Services Committee (DSC) for the purposes of making recommendation back to each individual municipality in regards to mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery. Stevens added that the DSC would provide a communication clearinghouse between the public agencies by analyzing disaster response operations and consolidating efforts as a whole community.

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Schapelhouman summarized that the Districts intent is to discuss with the Town shared interest, planning and preparedness as it relates to fire and disaster. Chief discussed the potential dangers of Atherton's vegetation and tree canopies. He suggested we begin looking at best practices and making sure our residents are well informed of them.

Fire District Liaison Cary Wiest introduced and welcomed new Fire Board member Robert Jones.

Fire Board President Peter Carpenter discussed his desire to improve best practices and provide education to residents and to improve the emergency alert system. Schapelhouman noted that the Town has an evacuation system and siren in place for Walsh Road that could be enhanced and duplicated elsewhere.

There was discussion regarding how Atherton Disaster and Preparedness Team (ADAPT) is integrated into the planning and discussion about how to make the Town more defensible to fires through "thinning" of vegetation and canopies.

Discussion ensued regarding wiring for poles along the Caltrain electrification corridor. Schapelhouman discussed his concerns particularly with downed power lines and the high potential for fire when there is dense canopy like Atherton. He added that he would like to be involved in assessing the potential risks.

Council Member Widmer asked how the intergovernmental disaster services committee differ from the FEMA guidelines for preparedness. Chief Stevens noted that this committee gives each jurisdiction a seat at the table for direct communications and discussions on planning, training, and exercises for a common response.

Fire Board Member Chuck Bernstein asked what happens to the water pressure in the event a high number of home sprinklers turn off. Johnston noted that accumulation would impact water supply. Chief Long added that residential sprinklers don't save, they suppress fire. Commercial sprinklers are intended to save life and property.

Council Member DeGolia requested suggestions and recommendations from the District to improve survivability.

#### Public Comment

Tom Prussing, discussed the mission of ADAPT and what they do.

Walter Sleeth, suggested the Town re-look at ordinances, particularly with trees, to improve survivability.

Ramona Marie thanked the Fire Department for their hard work.

Bernstein noted that ADAPT has merged professional volunteers who work very well together. He added that the emergency alert system needs improvement. Schapelhouman agreed.

## 2. Town-wide Traffic and Mobility Solutions and the Impact of Regional Growth

Schapelhouman noted that the Town currently does not have a lot of traffic control devices which helps speeds up emergency response. Speed of response is what the District strives for. The Town and District have to balance this with increasing traffic impacts from surrounding jurisdictions.

Mayor Lempres noted that the Town and District share a lot of interest in. We don't want to slow emergency response and need to work together on mitigating traffic impacts from development from surrounding jurisdictions.

There was discussion on the number of traffic mitigating devices on roads and how it slows emergency response and how the municipalities can work together to approve devices that have the least amount of impact on response times.

Council Member Lewis noted that emergency responders appear to use Atherton's roads for faster response times and the residents are burdened with the amount of cut through traffic and speeders. She noted that residents are concerned about the speeding and requesting traffic calming devices often but there is push back from the Fire District for the devices.

Vice Mayor Wiest discussed the Town's frustration with the traffic and speeds on El Camino Real. He noted the numerous enforcement efforts on El Camino Real. He concluded that the Town needs to take responsibility to help the District manage components for safer and faster emergency response.

Mayor Lempres requested from the District that to the extent they become aware of development projects in surrounding jurisdictions that could impact traffic in Atherton to please make them aware that Atherton is not inclined to change the nature of its community to address project development in other communities.

Schapelhouman encouraged some set of shared values between communities for public safety and emergency response.

Carpenter noted that the Board meets at a regular meeting the following week and will be putting together specific objectives to make sure they move forward on some of these discussions.

**PUBLIC COMMENT #2** – None.

### **INFORMATION ONLY ITEMS**

3. Wikipedia - 2016 Fort McMurray Wildfire
4. Builders Wildfire Mitigation Guide
5. Homebuilder's Guide to Construction in Wildfire Zones
6. Article - California Needs to Rethink Urban Fire Risk After Wine Country Tragedy
7. Article - How to Survive a House Fire
8. Article - The Ember Threat and the Home Ignition Zone
9. Walsh Road Area Fire Evacuation Plan

### **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:09 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Theresa N. DellaSanta  
City Clerk