

Minutes of the Work Session held May 21, 2012 at 6:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers

MEMBERS PRESENT

Mayor Lopez Rogers and Council Members

Stephanie Karlin, Vice Mayor
Jim Buster
Jim McDonald
Charles Vierhout
Ken Weise

ABSENCE EXCUSED

Frank Scott

ALSO PRESENT

Charlie McClendon, City Manager
David Fitzhugh, Assistant City Manager
Rogene Hill, Assistant City Manager
Paul Adams, Fire Chief
Mark Gorla, Emergency Management Officer
Andrew McGuire, City Attorney
Carmen Martinez, City Clerk

1) ROLL CALL BY THE CITY CLERK

2) RESIDENTIAL EMERGENCY ACCESS KEY BOX PROGRAM

Information regarding the residential emergency access key box program.

Charlie McClendon, City Manager, reported that citizens have requested that the City consider ways to make residential key boxes available to members of the public. Fire Chief Paul Adams said emergency access boxes have been in place for commercial properties in Avondale for over 25 years, as required by the Fire Code. Knox manufactures the boxes in current use. They also sell residential versions, which are keyed the same as commercial boxes and cost between \$187 and \$225. The key box program is managed by the Fire Marshall.

Chief Adams stated that key boxes primarily store keys for door locks, but they can also store codes for alarms and garage doors and important medical information pertaining to residents. These boxes allow emergency access to residences in the event that the occupants cannot get to the door, and prevent damage caused by forced entry. The master key used to open the boxes is kept in a secure box on the fire apparatus, and are unique to the City of Avondale. Copies of master keys are also provided to fire departments in neighboring communities that might respond on an automatic aid basis.

Chief Adams explained that the City of Peoria uses the \$50 Supra H-4 box, which they buy in bulk and resell to residents. Residences that have key boxes on premises are recorded in the computer aided dispatch system. Sun City West uses a similar system to Peoria. The City of Scottsdale's system is managed by the Police Department, and uses boxes available at hardware stores for \$29. Boxes are installed by police volunteers. Code information is entered into the emergency dispatch system. Goodyear is also considering a program using store bought boxes installed by residents. Glendale is considering a key box program, but has not settled on a purchase and installation method yet. El Mirage uses the Knox residential box, purchased and installed by residents.

Chief Adams listed the pros related to the Knox box. They are UL listed and the most secure boxes on the market. Three different mounting options are provided: surface, flush, and door hanging. The Knox box also provides a tamper switch option that can be tied into the security alarm. The residential version of the Knox box uses keys that are consistent with the commercial box keys. The cons to the Knox box are its larger size and higher cost. Residents might fail to inform the Fire Department when they change locks on the residence.

Chief Adams said Supra H-4 is smaller, costs less, and uses the same key as the Supra commercial box, which the Fire Department already has a key for. The cons are that it is not UL listed, and the ordering process is more complex. Under this option, residents could also fail to inform the Department when they change locks. The Supra key safe model comes in wall mount and padlock styles. They cost \$29 at Lowes or Home Depot. The owner has the ability to change the code on the box. On the other hand, the boxes are not UL listed, the access code could be easily compromised, and the owner could change the code without advising the Department. The boxes can be forced open relatively easily. The MasterLock Select Access box has similar pros and cons to the Supra key safe. They use a thumbwheel changeable code, are a little more secure, but still pose some access issues.

Chief Adams next reviewed the pros and cons of various installation options. Leaving installation to residents eliminates any City liability, but risks that the box will not be ideally located or securely installed. Installation by the City allows for more consistency in the box location. Keys would be secured at the time of installation, and there would be opportunities for follow-up home safety or security discussions. On the other hand, there may be a significant liability for the City possibly damaging something, or improperly installing it. The Department has a lack of staff available to do installations.

Chief Adams said leaving the purchasing to the residents does not involve a financial commitment by the City, but the Supra H-4 purchase process is more complex, and the hardware stores might not have enough of the key safe models in stock to fulfill demand. If residents could purchase boxes from the City, they would be immediately available, and the City would know where they are being used. The cons to this method are that the City would require funds to make the initial purchase, and there would be increased documentation and storage space requirements.

Chief Adams stated that regardless of what method is used, if residents indicate that they have an access box available to the Fire Department, the information will be entered into the dispatch information. He advised that Avondale support the Knox residential box as the primary recommendation. The Department would also support a program using the Supra H-4 key box for residential use, with the purchase and installation being done by residents after the execution of appropriate liability release forms. Additionally, the Department would discourage the use of the key safe models available from Home Depot or Loews.

Council Member Vierhout inquired what happens when homes are sold. Chief Adams explained that this is one of the drawbacks. Residents are informed of their responsibility to update the Fire Department on any changes, but there is no way to get that information independently. If the homeowner changes locks, the Department can reopen the box and

change the keys. Council Member Vierhout preferred having homeowners take responsibility for purchase and installation.

Council Member Weise said the program works well for Peoria, because of the large senior population there. As the community gets older it makes sense for them, since it provides a legitimate alternative to breaking down the door. The Knox box is not affordable for people on a limited budget, however. The Supra H-4 is the best option. He preferred securing a contract with the manufacturer for purchase by City residents. He does not think the City should install boxes, but instead link residents with a resource for having them installed. The police should run the program.

Council Member McDonald inquired about a bulk discount. Chief Adams responded that the Supra H-4 is not designed for individual sales to residents. They are designed for large purchases by realtors and landlords. Discount would be small, if any. Council Member McDonald felt there was no advantage to having the City hold onto a stock of boxes. He favored placing the responsibility on citizens for purchase and providing a resource for installation, even if it comes at a nominal fee. He inquired about liability documentation. Chief Adams explained that the City Attorney would have to approve specific forms that indicate it is up to citizens to inform the Fire Department of any changes made to the locks. Andrew McGuire, City Attorney, added that citizens should be made aware that the City is not responsible for the boxes, one way or another. This would avoid any claim that could arise in the future. Council Member McDonald said he is in favor of allowing citizens the choice to get it done on their own.

Vice Mayor Karlin felt it should not be the City's responsibility to purchase lock boxes, to store them or to install them. The program would give older residents some peace of mind. Council Member Weise suggested getting in contact with cities that share fire resources with Avondale, to see how they are approaching the issue. It would also help to know how many residents potentially could use the program.

Council Member Buster said the City should not take on liability by getting into the residential key box business, but should afford residents the opportunity to get the devices. He inquired about the recommended installation policy. Chief Adams explained that the City would provide information about the various options, and how to install it. Council Member Buster said he supports the recommendation.

Council Member Vierhout suggested that the City provide website information on the types of installation services available to residents, provided that specific services are not named. Mayor Lopez Rogers added that the City could work with the Chamber of Commerce to refer people.

Mayor Rogers indicated that she had a speaker cards submitted by former Council Member Lynch and that while it was not part customary to have speakers during a work session, she would allow her three minutes to speak.

Betty Lynch said maturing populations are aware of the possibility of losing some of their independence. The biggest risk is safety. The installation and purchase costs are beyond the means of those on a limited income. Modern alarm systems feature fire, police and

emergency buttons that generate an immediate response without delay. These features are of no value if public safety cannot get in once they arrive. Peoria bought 600 boxes for \$25,000 and made them available to residents for \$50. She requested that the City adopt a policy similar to Peoria.

Mr. McClendon summarized that staff will assemble materials advising residents of their options, and leave the purchase decision to them. Residents will be told to let the Fire Department know whenever changes are made. Council Member Weise advised continued monitoring of the policies of neighboring cities.

3) **EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT UPDATE**

An update regarding the Emergency Management Program's accomplishments to date and prioritization of future activities.

Charlie McClendon, City Manager, said six months ago, Avondale made changes to the way it houses the Emergency Management Program, with the idea of making it a broader based program that would work with police, fire, and county, state, and federal officials.

Lt. Mark Gorla, Emergency Management Officer, reported that Avondale has started training in the National Incident Management System (NIMS), developed an emergency operations plan, drafted a continuity of operations plan, and is participating in a multi-city mitigation plan. The City uses an all-hazards approach to emergency management. Disasters come in four stages, a mitigation stage, a preparation stage, a response, and a recovery stage. The National Response Framework from FEMA establishes a structure of engaged partnerships at all levels, to help agencies share goals and support each other. The response is tiered, scalable, flexible, and adaptable operationally, to respond to incidents as they change. Effective unified command is indispensable and requires an understanding of the roles and responsibilities of every organization.

Lt. Gorla said Avondale's Emergency Management Plan is in the process of being updated. The last update was made in 2007. The current update involves identifying a continuity of government and operations plan, to determine what to do when a major disaster occurs. The mitigation plan will come up for review in about a year. In coming months a development and recovery plan will be developed, and the City is looking into establishing an emergency operations center, applying for grants to obtain the necessary equipment.

Lt. Gorla stated the Citizen Corps Council program was developed by the Federal government after 9/11 as a way to get citizens involved. The purpose of the CCC is to set up a group of volunteers, matching their skill sets with areas of service in the City. The CCC also supports educational training of citizens, identifies new volunteer opportunities, and serves as an advisor to City staff on volunteer issues. A recruitment letter is being finalized to create a CCC for Avondale.

Lt. Gorla reported that a key component of the update is the Training Exercise Plan, which will occur in stages, once the EOC is established. Activities over the next year will be to work on the Terrorism Liaison Officer Program, assess the City's recovery capabilities, and attend Emergency Manager Academy. The State Mutual Aid Compact is an agreement

between state and local agencies that provides a mechanism for statewide assistance, access to equipment, and reimbursement.

Vice Mayor Karlin said it can be very challenging to get numerous entities together in the wake of a disaster so that they all work together. She inquired about the number of responses to the recruitment call for the CCC. Lt. Gorla responded that the letters have not been sent out yet and staff is determining where to send them. Vice Mayor Karlin said FEMA places a great emphasis on the CCC, and it is important that the City do what it can to support the program locally.

Council Member Buster inquired about the proposed budget for this operation, and its impact on the Fire Department. Lt. Gorla responded that the program currently consists of his position, some basic training, and some equipment. Mr. McClendon added that the program has not affected the Fire Department budget, as a vacant FTE was taken from elsewhere in the organization. Much of the equipment and training has come from grants through FEMA. Council Member Weise said citizens expect the City to respond promptly during a disaster, and get them back on their feet. Council Member Vierhout asked whether the program would incorporate online training courses. Lt. Gorla said a big portion of basic training is conducted online.

Vice Mayor Karlin asked whether Avondale has a civilian defense building. Lt. Gorla responded that Avondale does not have a specific shelter plan yet, but is working with the Red Cross to re-assess their shelters. Vice Mayor Karlin suggested that once the issues are resolved, citizens should be provided with a list of shelter locations. Lt. Gorla noted that the Red Cross website provides such a list. Mayor Lopez Rogers said it is critical for the City to be prepared. She proposed that the faith based community would be a good source of volunteers.

4) ADJOURNMENT

With no further business before the Council, Council Member Weise moved to adjourn the work session. Council Member Karlin seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

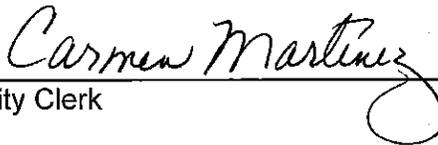
Meeting adjourned at 6:56 p.m.


Mayor Lopez Rogers


Carmen Martinez, CMC
City Clerk

CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that the foregoing minutes are a true and correct copy of the minutes of the Work Session of the Council of the City of Avondale held on the 12th day of May 2012. I further certify that the meeting was duly called and held and that the quorum was present.



City Clerk