



City Council Study Session Minutes – August 8, 2011

At 7:30 p.m. Mayor Maxwell called the regularly scheduled Anacortes City Council study session of August 8, 2011 to order. Eric Johnson, Brad Adams, Bill Turner, Cynthia Richardson and Brian Geer were present. Nick Petrish and Erica Pickett were excused.

Community Emergency Response Training (CERT)

Mr. Geer introduced Rick Wallace to tell the Council and community about neighborhood emergency preparedness training. Mr. Wallace, 1219 37th Street, summarized his professional background as a firefighter and emergency preparedness trainer. He said he has been working with Mr. Geer, in his role as Director of the Islands Chapter of the American Red Cross, and with Fire Chief Richard Curtis to expand CERT in Anacortes. He asked the Mayor and City Council for their support to encourage and promote preparedness training in the community.

Mr. Wallace explained that CERT was started in 1985 in Los Angeles after the Mexico City earthquake in which 800 people were saved by community members but 100 rescuers were lost. He said wildfires and earthquakes were the primary focus in California but Anacortes should also prepare for wind storms and other severe weather events. He said the public needs to know before disaster strikes what services the City is likely to provide, how limited those are, what sorts of disasters to expect, how to prepare, and to develop lifesaving and decision making skills to use in times of crisis. He added that 80-84% of people injured in disasters are rescued by non-professionals and that after a major event the response from professionals can be 72 hours to a couple of weeks out so communities need to be prepared to help themselves. Mr. Wallace listed the seven levels of CERT training and said there is also a class on terrorism response. He advised that the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) website has materials used for these trainings. Mr. Wallace suggested that public figures such as councilmembers help teach the classes to build support for the effort.

Mayor Maxwell inquired if Mr. Wallace was seeking a location for CERT classes and how community members would contact him to schedule training. Mr. Wallace said he had not settled on a location yet but had sent a potential schedule to Mr. Geer that would start in September. Mayor Maxwell said a group did this training locally some years ago and said neighborhood CERT would be good supplement to City's emergency response plan. He emphasized that citizens need to plan on helping each other in an emergency because the resources of the City and other agencies will be stretched. Mr. Turner asked the time commitment and cost of the training. Mr. Wallace said the eight classes involve 27 hours of training and that it costs about \$50 to cover basic equipment. Mr. Turner asked how an interested citizen would get more involved. Mr. Wallace said in a real emergency trained citizens first check their own homes and families, then establish contact with family out of the area, then meet at a designated point in the neighborhood and survey where everyone is and what resources are available. Neighborhoods then report to incident commanders or team leaders who communicate with public safety professionals. Mr. Turner asked how many citizens should be trained in a community the size of Anacortes. Mr. Wallace said the effort will grow and that over 500 people are trained in Everett.

Mayor Maxwell noted that the City emergency preparedness plan includes community volunteers and added that all City employees have CPR and first aid training. He said it would be good to have as many other community members as possible trained to help. Mr. Wallace suggested that training for employees of the school district, hospital and larger businesses would be useful. Mayor Maxwell invited Mr. Wallace to provide his contact information for posting on the City website. Mr. Wallace said he would continue working with Chief Curtis to promote the program. Mr. Geer added that information is also posted on the Red Cross website (www.theislandsredcross.org) and thanked local businesses for sponsorship to keep the cost of the training low. Mr. Wallace said he can be reached at rewallacepm-ff@comcast.net.

Island Hospital Off-site Sign Update

Assistant Planning Director Don Measamer introduced Island Hospital CEO Vince Oliver and Architect Marc Estvold to discuss proposed signage that would direct the public to the hospital emergency room. Mr. Measamer said City departments have been working with the hospital on the most effective solution. Mr. Oliver first thanked Council for recently adopting Resolution 1822 authorizing the New Market tax

credit program. He said the funding package closed Friday and the Medical Arts Pavilion project is now fully funded. Mr. Oliver then explained that the current signage proposal arose in response to the many complaints from the public over the past two years about having difficulty finding the emergency room.

Mr. Estvold, 3302 Oakes Avenue, outlined the philosophy of access to the emergency room. He said traffic from the west end is being routed into town on 12th Street then south on Commercial Avenue to 26th Street. Patients arriving via M Avenue are routed east on 24th Street to Commercial Avenue, then south to 26th Street. Mr. Estvold clarified that emergency vehicles access the emergency room off 24th Street but for safety reasons the public is not routed through that congested corridor. Mr. Estvold explained that three of the proposed signs to identify these routes would be located on property that is not owned by or immediately adjacent to property owned by Island Hospital, hence the hospital is sponsoring requests for encroachment agreements from those property owners to locate the signs. The three signs would be on the dive shop property at 25th Street and Commercial Avenue, on the taqueria property at 26th Street and Commercial Avenue, and at the corner of 26th Street and the alley. Mr. Estvold explained how the signs would provide a constant visual guide for patients traveling to the emergency room in private vehicles. Mr. Estvold then described the size and placement of the two-sided signs. Mrs. Richardson asked if the main hospital entrance for non-emergency patients is moving to 26th Street. Mr. Estvold said that entrance remains on 24th Street. Mr. Estvold then displayed and described the signs planned for elsewhere around the hospital, not specifically for the emergency room.

Mr. Geer observed that southbound traffic on Commercial Avenue will see the hospital entrance sign at 24th Street but will also see the emergency room sign at 25th Street and asked if that would confuse drivers. Mr. Estvold said the emergency room signs are all backlit red to distinguish them from the blue hospital signage. Mr. Johnson asked if a sign at the main entrance on 24th Street directs drivers to continue to Commercial Avenue to get to the emergency room. Mr. Estvold said yes, two signs do that. He said the hospital is trying to make the emergency room entrance as obvious as possible. Mr. Turner said after initial skepticism he now agreed with the decision to route private emergency room traffic via Commercial Avenue and 26th Street instead of directly off 24th Street but said the route is confusing so signs are definitely needed to help people find it. Mayor Maxwell requested some additional perspective photos and suggested that the sign on 26th Street might be sufficient without also adding a sign at the dive shop. He reminded that the City tries to reduce the number of signs on Commercial Avenue and warned against signs that might be vandalized. Mrs. Richardson asked for confirmation that all the signs except the three emergency room directional signs are on hospital property and that they conform to the City's sign ordinance. Mr. Estvold said the hospital has been working with Mr. Measamer on that. Mr. Johnson observed that the proposed sign at the dive shop may be too wordy.

Responding to Mrs. Richardson's question, Mr. Measamer said AMC 17.40.020 defines governmental signs and that hospital signage is excluded from the sign ordinance entirely. He said staff has been working with the hospital to fit the square footage into allowable areas. He explained that for the three signs that aren't on hospital property, the encroachment agreement application involves full staff review for sight distance, etc. He added that all signage requires building permits. Mrs. Richardson agreed that directional signs for the hospital and the emergency room are absolutely essential and entitled to an exception from the sign ordinance but that the hospital is a business so to allow signs magnificently larger than what would be allowed for any other business would be taking advantage of the exception. Mr. Measamer reported that the Medical Arts Pavilion sign at 24th Street and Commercial Avenue is on hospital property and meets the code for a multi-tenant commercial building. Mr. Adams asked if the proposed sign at the dive shop is offset from the building and where the stop sign will be relocated. Mr. Estvold responded that the sign would be about ten feet north of the edge of building with a sidewalk between. The stop sign would move to the west as part of the overall redesign of 25th Street and has already been through City engineering. Mr. Turner echoed the Mayor's suggestion to examine whether emergency room signs at both 25th Street and 26th Street are really necessary. Mayor Maxwell asked if the proposal would come back before City Council. Mr. Measamer said that encroachment agreements are an administrative process so would go through the directors of Public Works and Planning but not back to City Council. Mrs. Richardson clarified that the only off-site signs the hospital is proposing are directional signs for the emergency room and that there will be no off-site signs advertising the business.

There being no further business, at approximately 8:15 p.m. the regularly scheduled Anacortes City Council study session of August 8, 2011 adjourned.