

Selah City Council  
Study Session  
March 27, 2007

Mayor Jones introduced Charles Erwin, Deputy Director of the Office of Emergency Management (OEM). He praised Mr. Erwin and Director Jim Hall and assured the Council that the OEM would be an important asset to Selah in the event of an emergency.

Charles Erwin expressed his thanks to the City of Selah for their support through the years. He stated the OEM has been able to use Selah to try out new ideas through the years. He noted the Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP) he will present today has been approved by the state, and it exceeded the standards required by the state. He said it is a model in the state.

Allen Schmid asked about the duration of approval. Mr. Erwin responded the plan was originally approved in 2003 and comes up for amendment and adoption every four years.

Mr. Erwin stated that two state laws spell out the legal requirements for an Emergency Response Plan:

RCW 38.52 directs each political subdivision in the state to establish a local emergency management organization or to be part of a joint local organization, and  
WAC 118.30 sets guidelines/criteria for compliance with that law, including the requirement that the local emergency management organization be established by ordinance or resolution.

He stated this Plan has been signed by the County Commissioners for unincorporated areas and is being promulgated through all of the local municipalities. He suggested that anyone who questions the need for the Plan should look at the Yakima River flood of 1996. He stated the OEM is also urging school districts to adopt this plan because it will help them minimize their liability.

Mayor Jones noted once a year the City of Selah holds an exercise for staff and the superintendent. He noted Selah is one of the few cities where everyone shows up.

Mr. Erwin stated sometime this year we will probably need to do another exercise. He noted since Katrina, the lawyers have been coming out in droves to blame various leaders. He noted the four phases of Emergency Management are Preparedness, Response, Recovery, and Mitigation. He stated the Fire and Police Departments primarily concentrate on Response, but Recovery is where the real work starts for government. The emergency is dealt with, but Recovery is building, renewing, and funding to start over again.

He reminded the Council that they adopted a Mitigation Plan. He stated the Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP) is Strategic Planning, setting the strategy for entities like Public Works, Police, and City Council. He stated it is responsibility oriented.

He referred to the handout for CEMP and reviewed the Basic Plan and its sections: **Section 1 Continuity of Operations (COOP)** how will the City function? It was noted that Selah Intermediate School will be the site for City government if City Hall is shut down. Chief Davis said the Fire Department will operate out of one of the District's satellite stations.

**Section 2 Mitigation** what is in place to prevent or reduce impact of an emergency?

**Section 3 Preparedness** Mr. Erwin noted there are 17 Emergency Support Functions listed. He gave the example that if the ECC decided a demolition were necessary, it would be brought to the Council, which, in turn, would vote on it. Similarly, if the Mayor declared a curfew, it would require Council approval.

Councilman Schmid asked if this plan had been in effect when we had heavy snows in 1996-97, whether the Council would have made decisions as to what was to be torn down, etc.

Mr. Erwin responded that Code Enforcement can make those types of decisions, but the City Council should have a role in the decision-making process.

Fire Chief Davis said when there was no Code Enforcement Officer, the Fire Department took that responsibility and asked the Police to enforce the decision.

Mr. Erwin stated the guidelines are pretty well detailed in federal building and public health guidelines. He noted there's a whole series of policy training that he would be glad to cover with the Council in a training session.

Councilman Schmidt said we should be careful because it's one thing to red-flag a building and leave another in limbo. He asked, "What if someone dies?"

Mr. Erwin stated in Wapato policy decisions are made by the Council with direction to departments. The Council has discretionary immunity; however, a Fire Chief is wearing a uniform, and he doesn't have discretionary immunity. CEMP is based on what the public expects of government in an emergency.

#### **Section 4 Response**

**Section 5 Recovery** covers long-term community recovery. The Council looks at an event and decides what to do.

**Section 6 Special Subjects** includes such things as Floods, the Columbia Generating Station, Hazardous Materials, Weapons of Mass Destruction, USBR Dams, Foreign Animal Disease, Bio-Terrorism and Airport Emergency Plans. He said the OEM is working with school superintendents to make school districts become dispensing stations in case of a pandemic.

Mr. Erwin gave Mayor Jones five copies of a handout covering the National Incident Management System (NIMS). He noted that the executive summary bullets say that the City Council's responsibility is to make sure departments have had the appropriate levels of training. He noted by June **they** will be checking on NIMS compliance. He noted

training requirements have been relaxed somewhat, and now one can go on the website and take courses. He noted, in summary, the plan will undergo revision whenever any of the following conditions have been met:

- ? any other condition occurs that causes conditions to change
- ? it fails during an emergency.
- ? exercises or drills reveal deficiencies or shortfalls
- ? local government changes
- ? community situations change

Mayor Jones noted the City has planned well for auxiliary power, but while schools are one place that we would probably want to house people, they do not yet have auxiliary power.

Charles Erwin stated he has been working with Bill Eller regarding ADA requirements. He noted the obligation of local government is to identify and provide care, transportation and evacuation to an appropriate place where persons with special needs can be taken care of. He stated **they** want government to survey the population to identify those with special needs. He stated this could be a major headache for local governments.