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Moraga Citizen Corps Council Revived

By Sophie Braccini



From left: Dennis Rein, Bob Priebe, Jonathan Goodwin, Gary Borelli, and Linda Borelli Photo Sophie Braccini

Neighborhood Emergency Preparedness (MNEP). Representatives from the Red Cross and the local Community Emergency Response Team were unable to attend.

The Citizen Corp Councils of Lafayette and Orinda operate quite differently from each other.

According to Rein, Orinda's has no direct affiliation with city government, reflecting FEMA's definition of a council. "They meet at somebody's house and talk about things they are involved with such as neighborhood watch, schools and group preparedness. They spread the word about what they do and get support."

Lafayette has an official city commission with a budget. It falls under the Brown Act, which creates some boundaries and formalities.

The plan is for the Moraga council to be similar to Orinda's, with the sharing of ideas among all people involved and interested in emergency preparedness. The group will meet once a month. "This would create the connective tissue between the neighborhoods and the official people," said Goodwin, who has long held the belief that a town's official plan is not enough.

Linda and Gary Borelli talked about the difficulty they've found in recruiting volunteer neighborhood captains to help organize orderly response at the neighborhood level. "People need to know if they should check on an elderly neighbor; everyone should know where to turn off their neighbors' gas valves in case of an earthquake; and what to say to kids who might be home alone with a baby sitter," said Borelli.

More than 100 Orinda neighborhoods are organized; in Moraga there are only about two dozen such neighborhood groups.

The next meeting of the Moraga Citizens Corps Council is at 7 p.m. on June 12, at the Hacienda de las Flores. One of the agenda items will be the October Lamorinda Shake-Out where the 3 communities will practice emergency response to a disaster scenario. Anyone interested in the Citizen Corps is invited. For more information, email Dennis Rein at drein@mofd.org.

By many accounts, there has been a Citizen Corps Council in Moraga for a long time. However, no meetings have ever been held and nobody really knows who comprises its membership. When Dennis Rein was hired as Emergency Preparedness Coordinator for Moraga and Orinda, and now Lafayette as well, he understood that the job would include acting as the Moraga-Orinda Fire Department liaison to Lamorinda's three Citizen Corps Councils. Orinda and Lafayette have active councils in place; Rein recently undertook the task of reviving the one in Moraga.

According to its web site the Citizen Corps' mission is "to harness the power of every individual through education, training, and volunteer service to make communities safer, stronger, and better prepared to respond to the threats of terrorism, crime, public health issues, and disasters of all kinds." It was launched by George Bush in 2002, following the events of September 11, 2001. Citizen Corps is coordinated nationally by the Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

Rein invited representatives of local groups involved in emergency preparedness to a meeting on May 9. The attendees included Police Chief Bob Priebe, Canyon resident Jonathan Goodwin, and Linda and Gary Borelli of Moraga

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